

The 'American Exceptionalism' of Jay Lovestone and His Comrades, 1929–1940

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The 'American Exceptionalism' of Jay Lovestone and His Comrades, 1929–1940

Dissident Marxism in the United States

Volume 1

Edited by

Paul Le Blanc and Tim Davenport



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Preface

This book – made up of writings by people who several years later stopped believing in what they had been saying – could be seen as a strange volume that is part of a peculiar project. It is to be the first of a five-volume series on dissident Marxism in the United States, which is scheduled to appear over the next few years. These volumes are to be made up mostly of primary sources – reflections, reports, analyses, proposals, etc. – produced by US Marxists from the late 1920s through the start of the 1960s. Writings by dead people for a cause that has been widely believed (at least since the collapse of Communism, roughly a quarter of a century ago) to be utterly discredited – what's the point?

To be a little more specific, the present volume – *'American Exceptionalism'* – presents the writings of what a sympathetic historian, Robert J. Alexander, has called the Right Opposition, an influential current led by Jay Lovestone which was briefly in control of, and then dramatically expelled from, the Communist Party in the late 1920s, and which maintained an independent existence through 1940, after which some of its leading figures ended up evolving much further to the right on the political spectrum.¹ Also projected are two volumes (one running from the late 1920s to the start of the 1940s, and the other running from that point to the start of the 1960s) on what might be called the Left Opposition, another split-off from the Communist Party, associated with Leon Trotsky. Divided along similar chronological lines (from the late 1920s up to the 1960s) are two final volumes presenting Marxism that is organisationally *independent* – not only from the Socialist and Communist parties, but also from the Lovestoneites and Trotskyists.

The question still hangs in the air: why create such volumes? And why should anyone look through them (not to mention actually read them)?

My own experience in the United States, certainly from 2008 through 2014, is that many, many people are facing a convergence of crises – up close and personal – cascading upon us on the local level, on the national level, and globally as well. (People in other countries are experiencing this too, and some have it much worse than we currently do.) Now is not the first time this has happened. It has been a recurring problem. Historically, there are accumulations of experiences and struggles that have been generated by such recurring problems. There have, even before we were born, been descriptions of these, and analyses and strategies and tactics developed in order to help people respond creatively and positively to such situations. In the present and the future, there

¹ Alexander 1981.

will certainly be thoughtful activists who – seeking resources for making sense of what is happening and for finding pathways to a better future – will want to know something of these insurgent experiences and ideas of the past.²

One of the most comprehensive bodies of thought and struggle is associated with the efforts of Karl Marx, who, with a number of close friends and comrades (which included his wife Jenny Marx, *née* von Westphalen, Frederick Engels, and others) developed what they perceived as a *scientific* socialism (firmly rooted in what came to be known as the social sciences) that later came to be called ‘Marxism’. (This new name is not what Marx himself wanted, but you cannot always get what you want: it was one of the most minor of many things that had turned out differently than he had intended.) By *socialism*, Marx and his co-thinkers meant a ‘free association of the producers’ flowing from the abundance created by developing technology. It was to be a cooperative commonwealth – establishing rule by the people over the political, social and economic life of society, creating a situation in which the free development of each person would be the condition for the free development of all.

The recurrent problems which continue to impact on us were identified by Marx and others as being generated, historically, by a succession of class societies, in which a wealthy and powerful elite enriches itself through the exploitation of labouring majorities, complemented by various forms of oppression that are deemed necessary to maintain the status quo. In ‘modern times’, the dominant economic system was labelled *capitalism*, in which the capitalist minority (super-rich businessmen sometimes referred to by Marx as the *bourgeoisie*) exploits a labouring majority, the working class (which Marx sometimes referred to as the *proletariat*), with the capitalists chasing after the expansive accumulation of private profit, to the detriment of us all. Marx believed that the working class should and would eventually utilise its own immense power to end this state of affairs, bringing a transition from capitalism to socialism.³

The Marxist tradition exerted, from the late nineteenth century down through the late twentieth century, a powerful influence among those seeking to build working-class movements. Within this tradition, however, significant differences arose over how to properly understand and change the world. By the third decade of the twentieth century, an irreconcilable divergence had

2 Economics Editor of the British Broadcasting Corporation's *Newsnight*, Paul Mason, has produced three informative and interesting books providing entry-points to each of the dimensions touched on here – Mason 2009; Mason 2010 and Mason 2012.

3 One of the best studies of Marx's life can be found in Gabriel 2011. One of the best introductions to his ideas can be found in Eagleton 2011, but see also Le Blanc 1996. For a rich historical and global contextualisation, see Ness (ed.) 2009.

opened up between a reformist Social-Democratic wing and a revolutionary Communist wing of the Marxist movement. As time passed, both were overwhelmed internally by a process of bureaucratisation that tended to stifle creative and critical-minded thinking and democratic politics. Ultimately, both had become largely discredited by the time the twenty-first century arrived. In the eyes of many, Communism was especially discredited because it became a repressive and often murderous bureaucratic tyranny, which nonetheless proved incapable of surviving, while social democracy was discredited not only because it proved incapable of replacing capitalism, but even incapable of maintaining its own modest social reforms in the face of pro-business assaults and austerity programmes.⁴

One of the challenges for scholars, but also for activists and would-be revolutionaries, is to understand what happened – and also to locate strengths, positive lessons, and durable insights among the failures. In order to do this, it is necessary to engage with some of the best scholarship available, but also to consult primary sources to see what those who actually lived ‘back then’ had to say. There is a significant body of scholarship dealing with the two major left-wing currents (Social-Democratic and Communist) inside the United States, represented by the Socialist Party of America and the Communist Party USA, as well as some primary-source material.⁵ There is less material on the ‘dissident’ currents – those breaking off from, and independent of, these other two. It is these dissident currents that are the focus of this series. In contrast to what has been the case in some countries, none of these left-wing currents have taken political power. Yet Marxist currents in the United States, both ‘mainstream’ and dissident, have actually had a significant impact upon labour and social movements that have been of some importance in the shaping of that country’s history.⁶

4 For an outstanding survey, see Eley 2002.

5 On the Socialist Party of America, among the rich array of works available are Ginger 2007, Shannon 1967 and Warren 1974. On the US Communist Party, an even more voluminous listing could be offered, but for starters see Theodore Draper’s magnificent two volumes, Draper 1957 and Draper 1960, and a fine reinterpretation of the same period, Palmer 2007; on the 1930s, see Klehr 1985 and Ottanelli 1991; on the 1940s and 1950s, see Isserman 1993, and Shannon 1959. Some primary sources are provided in Fried (ed.) 1992, Fried (ed.) 1997 and Bart, Bassett, Weinstone and Zipser (eds.) 1979.

6 Perry Anderson, in his classic *Considerations on Western Marxism* (Anderson 1979, p. 98) commented in regard to Trotskyism: ‘One day this other tradition – persecuted, reviled, isolated, divided – will have to be studied in all the diversity of its underground channels and streams. It may surprise future historians with its resources’. At this point in time, the same can be said of the entire Marxist tradition, and certainly the dissident currents, which actually played a far more important role in the history of the United States than has

This being the case, it strikes some of us (at the very least me, my collaborators, my publishers) as being reasonable and useful to produce such volumes as these. These volumes may be more interesting to more people now than they would have been fifteen years ago. They may become even more interesting to a greater number of people in the foreseeable future. We will see.

It has seemed to me essential (given the time limitations imposed by my own mortality and engagement with other projects, such as teaching, sleeping, protesting over various things, playing chess with my computer, reading books, watching movies and plays, spending quality time with family and friends, etc.) that I secure collaborators who share some of my interests and passions, particularly about dissident Marxism, to help make these volumes possible.

I have been particularly blessed to have stumbled upon a strange person named Tim Davenport – strange because he not only knew who the Lovestoneites were, but had been reading their material, in part because of the fine work he has been doing maintaining his own ‘Early American Marxism’ website (www.marxisthistory.org) and working with many others in maintaining such things as the Marxist Internet Archive (<http://www.marxists.org>) and Wikipedia. It has been a pleasure working with Tim, although working together has been rather ‘virtual’, given that we happen to be at different ends of the United States. The pleasure flows from the fact that he is knowledgeable, funny, smart, and incredibly hard-working. (And he is sufficiently graceful not to rub it in to the extent that he perceives I am less of any of these things than he is.)

In addition to his essay which constitutes Chapter Three, Tim gathered and edited materials contained in chapters Four, Five and Six. I am responsible for the material in the other chapters, and also for brief introductions for all chapters except for Chapter Four, which is ‘introduced’ by Tim’s previously-mentioned essay.

In all of this, our hope is to help clear broader pathways for scholars inclined to give attention to matters touched on here, and perhaps also to provide resources for thoughtful activists seeking a better future than we seem to face at this moment. One can anticipate that divergent and counterposed ‘lessons’ will be drawn from the material presented in this volume. That has always been part of the process of understanding and changing the world.

Paul Le Blanc

commonly been acknowledged – see, for example, Le Blanc 2006, Le Blanc 2010 and Le Blanc and Michael D. Yates 2013.

Acknowledgements

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PART 1

Introducing the Lovestone Group

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What is the Communist Party Opposition?

Editors' note: A summary of the Lovestone group's politics, as they themselves presented it to the public, was put forward in the pamphlet authored by Bertram D. Wolfe, *What Is the Communist Party Opposition?*,¹ the larger part of which appears here (the remainder, a lengthy appendix entitled 'Trotsky and Trotskyism', is reproduced as item 22 in Chapter Seven). Wolfe's summary of its politics held true, more or less, from 1929 to 1937.

The group went through a dramatic evolution, signified by a succession of names. From November 1929 until September 1932, it called itself the Communist Party USA (Majority Group). This reflected the fact that, before the Lovestoneites' final confrontation with the Stalin leadership in the Communist International and the expulsion of those who refused to recant (the focal point of chapters Three and Four), they held leadership in the Communist Party USA and formally had a substantial majority of the organisation behind them. It also reflected a belief that they would soon resume their rightful place as leaders of the Party. When it became clear that a majority of the 'official' Communist Party no longer supported the perspectives of Lovestone and his co-thinkers, that the Lovestoneites themselves could not count on more than a few hundred activists, and that reintegration into the Communist mainstream would take longer than imagined, the group's name became Communist Party of the USA (Opposition) – often shortened to Communist Party Opposition (CPO), the group for which Wolfe wrote his pamphlet. This was the group's name from September 1932 to May 1937. For most of that time, the orientation toward the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement remained more or less the same (as indicated in Chapter Five).

The Lovestone group also helped to form, and participated in, a network of like-minded groups of various countries that took the name International Communist Opposition (ICO), whose most prominent components – aside from the Lovestone group – consisted of German dissident Communists grouped around Heinrich Brandler and August Thalheimer, Indian dissident Communists grouped around M.N. Roy, and Spanish dissidents grouped around Joaquín Maurín (who joined with former Trotskyists to form the POUM, the Unified Marxist Workers' Party). The ICO was also close to the Independent Labour Party in Britain, led by Fenner Brockway, and the Workers and Peasants

1 Wolfe 1938.

Socialist Party (PSOP) of France, led by Marcel Pivert. At the beginning of 1938, this network went out of existence, merging into a broader but looser International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity (often referred to as the London Bureau) – although this was resisted by some ICO members, especially the Brandlerites of Germany. As the Second World War engulfed Europe in 1939–40, all of this was more or less swept out of existence.²

Such developments found reflection in the fortunes of the Lovestone group, the other decisive international development being the crystallisation of Stalinism as a particularly murderous force associated with purge trials, mass killing and intensified repression – often directed at precisely the kinds of Communists represented by the Lovestoneites. (The political shift and consequent evolution are indicated by material in chapters Six, Eight and Nine). In May 1937 they changed their name to Independent Communist League of America, and in July 1938 they dropped all self-conception as being part of the Communist movement, taking the name Independent Labor League of America. The group did not survive for long in this final incarnation.

While it existed, however, the Lovestone group played a significant role in the US social struggles of the 1930s and in the development of US Marxism (as indicated in chapters Seven and Eight). The author of *What Is the Communist Opposition?*³ played a prominent role in that.

Bertram David Wolfe was the outstanding scholar and intellectual of the Lovestone group. While in the central leadership of the mainstream Communist Party between 1925 and 1929, Wolfe had professionalised and built up the organisation's primary educational institution, the Workers' School, and had played a substantial role in explaining, educating around and popularising the ideas and politics of the Communist movement. He had fine literary skills, remarkable language abilities (becoming fluent in German, Spanish and Russian), a growing familiarity with the complexities of Marxist theory and a commitment to integrating the Marxist tradition with the revolutionary traditions that had been integral to the history of the United States. And he had a capacity to express such things clearly and persuasively in the everyday parlance of the English language.

Wolfe served as director of the Lovestoneites' New Workers' School (originally called the Marx-Lenin School, in its final phase the Independent Labor Institute). His drive and talents for making Marxist ideas accessible to large numbers of people reached a high point when he facilitated the remarkable project undertaken by the great revolutionary artist whom he had befriended

2 This follows the account presented in Alexander 1981, pp. 278–94.

3 Wolfe 1933.

while in Mexico, Diego Rivera. Rivera created an amazing series of murals, with twenty-one movable panels in fresco, portraying the history of the United States from colonial times down to 1933, when the project was completed. The colourful frescoes were reproduced in a book entitled *Portrait of America*⁴ – losing little of their drama despite the necessary transition to black-and-white to make the book affordable. Wolfe, who had helped guide the artist through the often violent complexities of US history, supplied the book with a very readable text, although – rushing to complete it for early publication – he felt it lacked depth and sophistication. (In fact, it holds up tolerably well even today).⁵

Wolfe's talents as a thoughtful populariser also came through in his pamphlet, *Things We Want to Know*,⁶ which responded capably to sharp questions about Marxism and Communism from a sympathetic yet sceptical intellectual.

The key pamphlet that he wrote, however, was *What Is the Communist Party Opposition?*, published in 1932, and in an expanded edition at the end of 1933. The line it puts forward has interrelated components: (a) the need to reform the Communist movement to make it more democratic and unified, (b) the need to move past sectarianism in order to be relevant to the specifics of American realities, (c) the need to play a positive role in contemporary social struggles, in order to pave the way for socialist revolution, and (d) the notion that the Russian Revolution and developments in the Soviet Union pointed the way forward for such a revolution. This was the Lovestone group's hopeful orientation during its first seven years. When that perspective seemed no longer relevant, the group would fade out of existence.



4 Rivera 1934.

5 A flood of visitors came into the New Workers' School to see this remarkable history of the United States in which, as Wolfe later pointed out, despite depictions of violence and oppression, 'each panel had things for Americans to be proud of, which, on the whole, predominated over the things to be ashamed of in our history'. Responding to the murals, Albert Einstein was moved to write that Rivera 'characterizes the spirit of our time more than almost anyone else' (Wolfe 1981, pp. 620–1).

6 Wolfe 1934. It is available online at: <http://archive.org/details/ThingsWeWantToKnow>.

What is the Communist Opposition?⁷

Bertram D. Wolfe

Introduction to the First Edition

The Communist Party of the United States (Opposition) is a part of the Communist movement of the United States and of the international Communist movement. It stands for the reunification of the Communist Party of the United States, which has been split into three currents or tendencies, and for the reunification of the Communist International, which has been similarly divided. Its differences with the official leadership of the Communist Party and the official leadership of the Communist International, are not differences of basic principles nor fundamental aims. Our differences with the official leadership are on the question of tactics, the best methods of reaching our common aim and goal.

The Communist Opposition, like the official Party, stands on the following platform of basic principles and aims:

1. We stand for proletarian dictatorship, the rule of the working class. It is the only possible means of overthrowing capitalist political rule and economic domination.
2. The general form of the proletarian dictatorship is the workers' councils or Soviets.
3. Under the rule of the workers, we Communists aim to abolish the anarchistic, planless capitalist mode of production and substitute a planned society, to abolish private property in the means of production and substitute ownership of the means of production by the producers as social property, to develop a socialist economic order in which there are no classes and no exploitation of man by man – thus abolishing the very basis of class rule altogether.
4. The present government of this country represents the rule of the capitalist class. One has to be blind, indeed, not to see that the government represents a

⁷ Wolfe 1933, pp. 50–2, pp. 3–38.

dictatorship of big business, of a little handful of magnates and money kings. We Communists hold that the governmental form of the dictatorship of capital cannot be used as the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that the capitalist class will never give up its privileges and power without a brutal struggle to maintain itself by force against the will and interests of the majority, the producing population.

5. We hold that the Soviet Union is a proletarian dictatorship, expressing the interests and the will of the workers, that it is building a socialist society and that its existence and progress in the building of socialism are the mainstay and support of the workers of all lands in their struggle for power. The defense of the Soviet Union against all attacks, by any and all of the capitalist powers, is the unconditional duty of the working class of all lands. The defense of the Soviet Union is an indispensable part of the struggle of the world's working class for power.

6. In its struggle for power, and in the construction of socialism after it has gained power, the working class needs the leadership of a Communist Party. The Communist Party is the most advanced, most conscious part of the working class, distinguished by its greater devotion to, and consciousness of, the aims and interests of our class and the methods of attaining them, and by the organization of its own forces and connections with the rest of the working class. The action of the party is no substitute for the action of the working class. It has no interests separate and apart from the interests of the workers as a whole. Its aim is to lead the working class to victory in the proletarian revolution. Its form of organization must be democratic centralism.

7. The Communist movement of each country is a component part of the world Communist movement, and its struggle is part of the world Communist struggle. The leadership of the world struggle is the function of the Communist International. Its basis of organization must also be that of democratic centralism.

On the above basic foundations of Communism, all three main currents in the Communist movement (the official Communist Party, the 'Trotskyites' and the Communist Opposition) agree in principle. However, the Trotskyites disagree with our estimate of the class character of the state in the Soviet Union (the Trotskyite theory of 'Thermidor') as expressed in Point Five.

We hold that there is no room for the existence of two Communist parties in any country. The Communist Party (Opposition) is not a new Communist Party. It stands for the unity of all Communist forces in a single Communist Party, on the basis of the above basic principles, and insists that differences on tactics, on how to attain our aims, can and should be settled by comradely discussion inside the ranks of the party, and not by the splitting and division of

the Communist movement. The Communist Opposition fights for its readmission into the official Party and for its right to advocate its tactical views within the framework of democratic centralism. We are also for the readmission of the Trotskyite Opposition, provided it will give up its 'Thermidor' estimate of the nature of the Soviet government and the CPSU, which separates the Trotskyites from the other Communist tendencies not on tactical questions, but on the fundamentals involving proletarian dictatorship, Soviet rule and the defense of the Soviet Union. On other matters, although we disagree with the Trotskyites, we fight for their right to advocate their tactical viewpoints within the framework of the Party.

We do not insist that the official Party adopt our tactical views as a condition for unity. We ask merely for normal party democracy and the right to advocate our views before the Party membership. The Communist Opposition considers the fight for party unity to be one of its basic tasks.

Recognizing that the workers' struggle is international, we have joined up with Oppositions in other countries that hold the same viewpoint, to form the International Communist Opposition, which aims to reunify the Communist International and set it once more upon the path of Marxist-Leninist tactics, so that it may grow and be victorious throughout the world.

We assume that the reader is interested enough in the problems of the working class to give earnest and open-minded consideration to the questions raised in this pamphlet, and that, if the facts here set forth and aims expounded convince him, that the working-class reader will act upon his convictions and join actively and wholeheartedly in our struggle for the unity of our Party, the adoption of a tactical line that will enable it to grow, and ensure its victory in this country and the triumph of the Communist International, and the cause of Communism in all lands.

Introduction to the Second Enlarged Edition

This pamphlet seems to have met a real need. Within less than a year of the date of its issue, the first large edition is completely exhausted and a second edition has become necessary.

The republication of the original text unaltered serves to demonstrate to every thoughtful reader that the events of the last year have confirmed in a startling and tragic way the correctness of every line of it. Things only forecast in the first edition are today things fulfilled. Life itself has confirmed the correctness of the views of the Communist Opposition.

Germany Offers Tragic Proof

In Germany the proletariat has suffered a crushing defeat – the greatest, the most shameful defeat in its history. A few hundred thousand Brown-shirt bandits have succeeded in taking power without so much as a struggle, and have destroyed the mighty political and economic organization of the best organized working class in the world. The continued cowardice, compromise and treachery of the Social-Democratic leadership, and the continued unrealism, sectarianism and tactical bankruptcy of the official Communist leadership, left the working class leaderless, divided, powerless to resist.

The fatal theory of ‘social-fascism’, which made a united front of Social-Democratic and Communist workers impossible, the criminal nonsense of the ‘united front from below’, which was a substitute for any effort to develop a united front, the childish game of calling all opponents Fascists,⁸ so that genuine Fascism did not seem to require any special resistance, the unrealistic analysis which rendered all sound tactics impossible, the systemization of bluff and the habit of calling each defeat a victory – have borne their tragic fruit.

In the first edition we wrote:

Even the big German Communist Party has lost completely its once powerful position in the German trade unions and has been unable to check the rapid growth of Fascism or even the streaming of large sections of the working class into the Fascist ranks. While the Communist Party has virtually stood still or made relatively small gain, the Fascists have grown by leaps and bounds to become the largest party in Germany.

At that time, the above-quoted words might have seemed exaggerated to some Party members who heard the promises of a speedy Soviet Germany ringing in their ears. Today, everyone can see that those words were an understatement. Less than a year after they were written, Hitler is in power; the German proletariat crushed and bleeding; its organization smashed and the once mighty Communist Party reduced to an underground movement of thirty thousand, plus eight thousand of the Communist Opposition, fighting a valiant and heroic rearguard action to prevent complete annihilation and to begin the reconstruction of their fighting forces.

8 The party press called the Bruening government, the von Papen government, the von Schleicher government, each in turn, Fascist, so that Hitler would seem to be but a continuation of an already established regime.

The Fatal Harvest of Dual Unionism

Life itself has also demonstrated in tragic fashion the fatality of the union-splitting tactics of the ultra-left Party line. The German Communist Party, under instructions from the Red Trade Union International, split Germany's trade unions, drained out the Communists and their close sympathizers (a blood-letting process which left the mass of organized workers at the mercy of the reactionary bureaucrats) and formed the impotent RGO (*Rote Gewerkschafts-Opposition*) 'red unions'. In an instant, all the hard-won positions of leadership of powerful unions were lost, and no amount of meaningless theses about 'increasing the work in reactionary unions while building the Red unions' were able to prevent the wiping out of Communist influence as a force among the organized workers of Germany. When, on 20 July 1932, the fatal test came, on 12 September 1932, on 30 January, 1933, the days of the successive steps in the seizure of power by the Brown hordes of Hitler, when the Communist Party called for general strikes, not a finger was raised, not a shop went out, not a wheel stopped in all Germany. For the Communists were outside of the mass trade unions and you cannot call a general strike by handing out leaflets at random to men, women and children on the public streets.

America Confirms Our Trade Union Line

In America too, the trade union line of the Communist Opposition has received startling confirmation in recent months.

The sectarian line of official Communism was predicated on the following three dogmas:

1. That the American Federation of Labor was headed for collapse and under no circumstances could, or would, organize any fresh masses of workers.
2. That the AFL unions were nothing but 'company unions' and could not, under any circumstances, lead struggles of the workers.
3. That it was both futile and opportunistic, even treacherous, to fight within the conservative trade unions to transform them into militant industrial unions under progressive leadership.

When the first edition of this pamphlet appeared, these sacrosanct dogmas of sectarian Communism could be combated and disproved only on the basis of theoretical considerations and past experience. The depression weighed like an Alp upon the working class and there was little union organization or struggle. But in recent months, the sectarian line and the line of the Communist Opposition have been put to the test. There has been a profound

change in the temper of the American labor movement, a great wave of strikes in every industry and corner of the land, a veritable rush to organize. The wave of unionization sweeps over the sectarian wing of Communism with its dual 'red unions'. They seem incapable of forgetting anything or learning anything. Only the line of the Communist Opposition has withstood the test of the new developments. It has enabled us to orientate ourselves with realism and effectiveness in the new situation. Once more the line of the Communist Opposition is confirmed by life itself.

It is the test of life, after all, that all 'lines' and all theories must be able to meet. It was the confidence that our conception of strategy and tactics was correct, that 'history', which decides all such things, would decide for us, that made it possible to continue our work in the face of the abuse of the official spokesmen of the movement we cherish and serve, and to fight on against great odds to correct the line that is isolating, discrediting and crippling the Communist Party. Now that our analyses are being confirmed and the tide is beginning to turn, the Communist Opposition swims no less surely for having trained itself by swimming against that current when that current was in the wrong direction.

We can best close the preface to the second edition of this pamphlet as we closed the introduction to the first:

We assume that the reader is interested enough in the problems of the working class to give earnest and open-minded consideration to the questions raised in this pamphlet and that, if the facts here set forth and aims convince him, the working-class reader will act upon his convictions and join actively and whole-heartedly in our struggle for the unity of our Party, the adoption of a tactical line that will enable it to grow, and ensure its victory in this country and the triumph of the Communist International, and the cause of Communism in all lands.

December, 1933.

1. The Crisis in the Communist International

The past four years have been extremely favorable for the growth of the Communist movement.

In the capitalist world – depression, mass misery and starvation, open preparations for a new world war. In the Soviet Union – freedom from unemployment, expansion of industry, construction of socialism.

Millions are disillusioned and discontented with capitalism. Millions look to the Soviet Union with hope and longing. Never were conditions more favorable for the growth of the Communist movement – here and throughout the world. *Yet the Communist movement has not grown!*

The Condition of the International Today

What have the past three or four years brought to the Communist International? They have brought a continual, steady decline in membership in all important countries except Germany and the Soviet Union.

A profound crisis in inner-party life. The expulsion of the majorities of the Communist Parties of Sweden, Spain, India, Switzerland and the Alsace. The expulsion of the founders and most experienced leaders and officials of all important parties.⁹

The crumbling of entire parties. For example, the Czechoslovakian Communist Party lost eighty percent of its members in the first eighteen months after the expulsion policy and the International's change in political line began. The French party has been reduced to a chaotic sect and has lost its influence over the French masses. The English party, once numbering twelve thousand members, does not now number two thousand. The aftermath of a

9 When the German party held the celebration of its 10th anniversary, virtually all the Spartacus leaders, who had founded the party, had been expelled, so that the anniversary-speakers were men who had opposed or had not participated in the Spartacus revolt. The situation at the 10th anniversary of the CPUSA was similar.

general strike, the collapse of the 'Labor' government, the breakdown of the pound sterling and a mutiny in the fleet – all leave the British Communist Party smaller than it has been at any time since 1924. The South African party has lost ninety percent of its membership in two years.

Even the big German Communist Party has completely lost its once powerful position in the German trade unions, has failed to defeat German Social Democracy, even though the latter split, has failed to win the left wing which broke off, and has been unable to check the rapid growth of Fascism or even the streaming of large sections of the working class into the Fascist ranks. While the Communist Party has virtually stood still, or made relatively small gains, the Fascists have grown by leaps and bounds to become the largest party in Germany.

In brief, during these four years that were so favorable for the growth of Communism, not only has the movement not grown, but it has failed utterly to give leadership to the masses to meet their needs in the present crisis. The tremendous sympathy for Communism and the hatred of capitalism have not resulted in growing parties nor in the consolidation of class forces, have not been crystallized into an organized force such as the Communists and the working class had the right to expect.

The American Party

In the American Communist Party we find a similar situation. The old and experienced members, the founders of the party, and its builders in the harder years of the Palmer raids and 'Coolidge prosperity', have been expelled by the hundreds. Others have dropped out in disgust by the thousands. Fearful of the outcome of a discussion of their blunders and wrong-headed political line, the present leadership forbids discussion, expels questioners and critics, substitutes name-calling for argument, terror for comradeship and stifles the internal life of the party.

The work in the conservative trade unions has been abandoned or reduced to splitting activities. The once powerful left wing in the American Federation of Labor has disappeared. The independent unions under party control have disintegrated to mere paper unions, shadows of the party. Nothing remains of the 'new' textile and miners' unions and next to nothing in the needle trades.

Sectarianism, which separates the party from the backward masses, and amateurishness, sensationalism, recklessness and bluff, have taken the place of the earnest building and digging in, which aided the party's growth in the

past. *The Party, which in the heyday of 'Coolidge prosperity' was able to grow, has actually declined in membership in the period of depression!* From 1925 to 1929, when it was not easy to win workers to Communism, the party grew slowly, but steadily. On the eve of the change of line and expulsions, Party membership, in good standing, numbered about fifteen thousand. In 1932, after three years of capitalist depression and bankruptcy, three years of mass misery and discontent, the dues-paying membership had shrunk to less than half of that!¹⁰

Why Don't Parties Grow?!

When a new member or sympathizer asks why the party does not grow, why thousands are out, why the party has been split, he is told: 'It is Lovestone's fault'.

But does Lovestone live in Germany and Switzerland? Is it Lovestone's fault that in Sweden the 'expelled party' has over fifteen thousand members and the official party has less than three thousand? Is Lovestone responsible for the collapse of the party in France? Or in England, where there was not even an opposition group and almost no resistance to the false line of the Party?

No, the crisis is deep – too deep for it to be explained as the work of a devil or an angel. The crisis is international. The crisis grows out of the errors of the parties in every country outside of the Soviet Union. The errors are persistent and continuous. They prevent growth in spite of favorable conditions. They are not isolated errors. The whole line of the party is involved. The line of the International is involved. Until it is corrected, the parties cannot grow! To be a Communist does not mean 'just to belong', to be a cardholder. To be a Communist means to want to build a powerful party, to investigate why it does not grow, to remove obstacles in its path, to help it grow. To such genuine Communists this discussion is addressed.

10 At the last 1932 plenum, the membership in good standing was reported as between six-and-a-half thousand and seven-and-a-half thousand. Of the sixteen thousand who were members in 1929, less than three thousand remained at the end of 1932.

2. Roots of the Crisis

In over one-sixth of the earth, the workers rule. Their tasks are primarily those of building up a new social order.

In the other five-sixths, capitalism still controls. The tasks of the workers are primarily those of overthrowing the old social order.

As the proletarian revolution is delayed in the West, the gap between the development of the two sections of the earth temporarily widens. This widening gap, and the problems and difficulties it creates, are the basis of the present crisis in our International.

In the words of the International Communist Opposition: 'The real basic source of the ultra-left course is the false transference of the methods and forms of struggle, corresponding to a country in which the working class has already triumphed and in which socialism is being built, to the Communist Parties of those countries in which the majority of the working class has still to be won, and the prerequisites for taking up the struggle for power have still to be created'.¹¹

Since the death of Lenin, the leadership of the Russian Communist Party has become much narrower. At the first congresses of the International, the Russian delegation consisted of Lenin, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Stalin, Trotsky, Chicherin, Ossinsky and Vorovsky. Of this brilliant and experienced old guard leadership, only Stalin remains. Yet the monopoly of leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the Communist International has grown steadily more complete. Until Lenin's death, this monopoly was a favorable thing, chiefly because Lenin opposed its becoming permanent and conceived it to be the duty of the more experienced Russian delegation to aid in the development of the other parties, and lay the basis for a real collective leadership of all parties in the International.

'Many comrades have talked themselves into the idea', said Lenin at the eighth convention of the Russian Party, 'of the submission of all national

11 Resolution of the International Conference, July 1932.

parties to the International Committee of the Russian Communist Party. I must answer that if any one proposes such a thing we would have to condemn him'.

The monopoly of the leadership of the Russian Communist Party was a helpful thing in the early days, when the other parties were inexperienced and while it was carried on with the aim of making itself unnecessary. Now, however, the Russian leadership has become narrower, its tasks and experiences radically different from those of the parties in capitalist countries, and yet its monopoly of leadership in the International has become more absolute and complete than ever.

Making a Game of Factionalism

The acute factional struggles in the Russian Party have been systematically carried into the International. An effort has been made by both Trotsky and Stalin, and to a lesser extent by Bukharin, to develop fractions in every party, on the basis not of the problems of each country, but on the basis of the Russian party factions. Hence the unreal and unhealthy nature of so many disputes and changes of leadership in the various parties.

When Trotsky was attacking Stalin 'from the left', and making pseudo-leftist and ultra-leftist criticisms of the policies of the Russian Party's leadership, every party in the International was expected to find an 'ultra-left danger' and fight it as 'the main danger!' This was put through even in parties like the Czechoslovak party, where leftism was a rarity and the party was rotten with opportunism.

When Stalin finished his fight with Trotsky and broke with Bukharin, Rykoff and Tomskey, he denounced them as 'right-wingers' and all the fifty-odd parties in the International were suddenly expected, nay ordered, to find a 'right danger' and fight it as the 'main danger!' The reader can imagine what that did to the already demoralized Czechoslovak party!

Creating the Puppet Leadership

In every party, these unreal groupings and factional quarrels introduced confusion and chaos, encouraged the creation of puppet leaderships who would face now 'right', now 'left', as required by the factional exigencies of the leadership of the CPSU. The more unprincipled these puppets were, the less interested they were in the problems facing the working class of their own country, the less they depended upon the support of the rank-and-file of their own party and

the more they depended for their 'places' upon the support of the leadership of the Russian Party, the more suitable they were for this type of factional activity.

On the other hand, the necessary controversies about the issues and problems actually facing the party and the working class of each country were held back and prevented.

It was in such an atmosphere that the present disreputable puppet leaderships, having no roots in the masses of their respective countries and parties and no comprehension of the real problems facing them, became the 'leaderships' of the various parties. At the same time, the tried and experienced leaderships that had founded and built the parties, and were interested in building them rather than holding their 'places', were driven out.

Revision of Leninism

Still worse, however, was the gradual and the more and more rapid revision of the whole foundations of Leninist strategy. Political slogans appropriate to a given stage or situation in a given country were mechanically adopted in all countries at once. Unrealistic methods were applied that had no relation to the realities of the situation in each country. In place of real analysis of the peculiarities of each country and situation, was substituted the game of finding 'right dangers' and 'left dangers'. Those who protested, even feebly, or sought to maintain the old methods of Marx and Lenin and the general line that had built the party and the International, were expelled. No attempt was made to convince them or the membership generally of the correctness of the fantastic decisions and mechanical slogans. Those who sought to discuss were branded as 'renegades', 'counter-revolutionists', 'enemies of the Soviet Union', and were expelled even if they were willing to accept and carry out the false line to avoid expulsion! The reason is obvious: the new line cannot bear examination and discussion! If the new puppet leaderships had consented, or been permitted to consent to discussion, they would have been lost! Therefore, instead of conviction, abuse and name-calling!

The new 'leaderships' assumed that if they threw enough mud, some would stick. Indeed, the expulsions, the reign of terror in the parties, the flood of abuse, had some effect. Thousands all over the world were expelled. Tens of thousands were driven out or left in disgust. Old members were terrorized. New members were taught to close their minds to anything the 'renegades' might say about the needs of the party.

But as the bayonets and injunctions won't dig coal when the coal miners are on strike, neither will terror and abuse build a party when the line of the

party *is wrong*. Now we are in the fourth year of the new line, and the progress of the parties is like that of the famous comic opera army which took 'two steps forward, three steps backward'. Three years of capitalist crisis! Three years of mass misery! Three wasted years for the Communist movement! Three perilous years of Communist decline! So in spite of terror and abuse, the better members, the more conscious Communists, those who want not only to 'belong' but to build the party and help it grow, are beginning to ask: what is wrong with the line of our Party?

3. Building a Party on American Soil (*The Question of 'Exceptionalism'*)

In the queer jargon that takes the place of intelligible English in upper party circles, the American Communist Opposition is denounced as 'American exceptionalists'.

If we understand what the Party leaders are driving at, we plead guilty to the charge. Yes, we consider that conditions in America are different from conditions in Germany or Spain or the Soviet Union. We are more than 'American exceptionalists'. We are 'exceptionalists' for every country of the world! And in pleading guilty to considering the conditions of each country different from those of the rest, peculiar, 'exceptional', we are in good company – the company of Marx and Lenin.

The fundamental aims of the Communist movement are the same throughout the world – the overthrow of capitalism, the establishment of Soviet power, the building of a socialist society. *But the methods of reaching that goal, the tactics to be applied at a given moment, are different for each country and even for each stage of the struggle in a given country.*

A World of Endless Variety

The countries of the earth do not develop evenly, according to some Utopian blueprint or mechanical formula. They have different histories, different traditions, different relations of class forces, different degrees of development; they are in different stages. There are 'backward' countries and 'advanced' countries; industrial lands and agricultural lands; advancing powers and declining powers; big nations and small nations; creditor countries and debtor countries; colonies and imperialist powers; backward working classes and advanced working classes, etc., etc. Those who would build a Communist movement in any country must know that country. They must adapt their tactics to the special conditions of that country. Else they will never build a Communist movement at all.

Lenin the Exceptionalist

Here is how Lenin answered the abstract pedants, the ‘infantile Communists’, as he called them, who did not want to take into account the specific peculiarities, the concrete conditions, of each country:

We must clearly realize that such a leading center (as the Communist International) can under no circumstances be built after a single model, by a mechanical uniformity and levelling of the tactical rules of struggle . . .

So long as national and national-state differences exist between peoples and countries (and those differences will continue to exist for a very long time, even after the realization of the proletarian dictatorship on a world scale), the unity of the international tactics of the Communist labor movement everywhere demands, not the elimination of the varied national differences – this at the present moment is a foolish dream – but such an application of the fundamental principles of Communism (Soviet Power and the dictatorship of the proletariat) as would permit of the proper modification of these principles in particular and their correct adaptation and application to national and national-scale differences.¹²

Again and again, Lenin reminds us that the chief task of the scientific revolutionist or Communist in planning his strategy and tactics is: ‘To investigate, study, ascertain, grasp, the *nationally peculiar, nationally specific features* in the concrete attempts of every country to solve the aspects of a single international problem . . .’

In other words, slogans, solutions, proposals and tactics which are mechanically adopted for all countries at once, without regard to the peculiarities of each, are not likely to be good for any of them.

A party that wants to sink its roots in American soil must understand American political and economic conditions. If it wants to influence and lead the American workers, it must speak their language, understand how to solve their problems, make proposals that meet their needs, embodied in slogans adjusted to their development and understanding. This is not nationalism – it is the only true internationalism, for only by such methods can the Communist International develop a powerful American section, only thus can the aims of the working class be served in America, or in any other country on the face of the earth.

The leaders of the official Communist Party of the United States have their feet in America but their heads in Europe. Their speeches deal with the

12 *Editors’ note:* for a slightly different translation, see Lenin 1960–79a, p. 92.

problems of the Soviet workers and forget the problems of the American workers. Foster writes a book *Toward Soviet America*¹³ which might as well have been written on Mars for all the reflection of American realities that can be found in it. The latest slogans of the German Communist Party, often wrong even for Germany, are immediately imported into the United States. The German workers are in mortal combat with Fascism, so our party tells the bewildered American workers about Fascism and 'social fascism' in America. Not having a Hitler around at the moment it makes a 'social fascist' out of John Dewey or V.F. Calverton! The Soviet Union has shock troops. The next day the American Party has 'shock troops'. The Soviet Union tries to speed up production by 'socialist competition' between one factory and another. The next day the 'American' leaders are telling the American workers to enter into 'socialist competition'. Because the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has behind it the majority of the working class, the American leaders talk and act as if our little party had the majority of the working class behind it. They refuse to form united fronts with other parties (there are no other parties in the Soviet Union), denounce the millions that our party 'has' to win, and set up artificial barriers between the Communists and the mass of the American working class. Because the fight in America is hard and long, they substitute dreams about what is happening in the Soviet Union and try to keep their followers in a perpetual daze that will blind them to the weaknesses and failures of the American Party. By long gazing on the splendour of the rising sun of the Russian Revolution, the leaders of the American Party have become blind to the murky realities of America, and all the party's tactics are carried on in an atmosphere of unreality that has nothing to do with the situation and problems of the country in which it is trying to function. The Communist Party (Opposition) draws inspiration from the achievements of the Russian Revolution, but remembers that those achievements were the work of the Russian working class led by the most realistic Communist Party of the world, the Bolshevik party of Lenin. It proposes to imitate the methods of Lenin not by parroting, but by analysis of American realities, and by making the Communist Party of the United States into what it was rapidly becoming before the change of line in 1929 – *an American Communist Party speaking to the American working class in its own language, of its own problems, and proposing tactics in this country*, so as to lead the working class of the United States forward on the road to the achievement of its own historic destiny, the overthrow of the most powerful master class in history, and the conquest of America by the American workers for themselves and for the workers of the world!

13 Editors' note: Foster 1932.

4. The Trade-Union Question

The differences between the official Communist Party and the Communist Opposition are manifested most sharply in the field of trade union work. These differences show themselves even in the answers to the most elementary questions concerning the unions.

1. What are the trade unions? The unions are the most elementary, the broadest mass organizations of the working class. They are 'the primary school for Socialism' (Marx). They should include all workers regardless of creed, color, sex, age, occupation or political belief. The acid test of the soundness of a union organization is its functioning in a strike struggle. When a strike begins, we do not ask a worker: 'Are you Catholic, Jew or Protestant? Are you Republican, Democrat or Socialist? Are you Fascist or Ku Klux Klanner? If so you can't go out on strike with us'.

On the contrary, we say to the Fascist or the Ku Kluxer or the Tammany voter: 'You work in the same shop. You have the same interests. You suffer the same conditions, wage cuts, long hours. You have the same enemy, the same boss. Therefore you must come out with us!'

Obviously, then, a union is not a political party. It must not exclude, but include. It must not have a program appropriate to an advanced political party if its aim is to include politically backward workers. It cannot demand that all workers favor proletarian dictatorship, or Communist candidates, or turning imperialist war into civil war, or even the defense of the Soviet Union, before they can join. In short, a union of Communists and their close sympathizers is no union at all. It must seek to include all who toil, all who recognise the elementary fact that in questions of hours, wages and working conditions there is a conflict of interest between bosses and workers. And it must so defend the interests of these workers, as gradually to develop their sense of solidarity and class consciousness to the understanding of the wider class aims of the proletariat.

2. Are the Communists interested in wages and hours and other 'petty' questions? To this question we reply with an answer of Marx and Engels that will never be 'out-of-date'. 'The Communists', says the *Communist Manifesto*, 'have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. . . . The

Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement'.

3. How should Communists act in unions they 'control'? Given the relations of forces and stage of working-class development prevailing today in America, Communists are not likely to be at the head of many genuine unions. Only exceptionally, where the industry is in such a state as to have a specially radicalizing effect, or where a majority of the workers are recruited from some foreign nationality having an advanced Socialist tradition, or where the Communists have taken the initiative in organizing some hitherto unorganized field, are the Communists likely to be found at the head of genuine, widely inclusive unions.

Even in such cases, the Communist Opposition insists that the Communists must so conduct themselves as not to narrow the union down to Communists and their closest sympathisers, and must seek to link up the union in question with the rest of the labor movement rather than to isolate it from the other unions.

The Communists must propose an elementary program of class struggle, not an advanced program fit only for adherents of the party.

They must lead the union in the sense of inspiring, convincing and guiding, not in the sense of controlling, bossing and running it. They must practice what they preach in other unions – no bureaucratic control, union democracy, maximum initiative and activity of the rank-and-file, no orders or officers imposed upon the membership from above by a secret caucus or a mysterious order from 'headquarters', but patient proposal, explanation, and conviction, the willingness to accept defeat and abide by decisions, without expelling or splitting unions, knowing that future developments and proper explanation will in the long run convince.

Some Second-Hand Communist Parties

The conduct of the official party in the few paper 'mass' organizations it controls, is a perfect model of how not to guide and lead a trade union.

In the International Labor Defense, the International Workers' Order, and foreign-language fraternal and benefit societies, all supposed to be 'united front mass organizations' accepting everyone who stands on the elementary ground of the class struggle, the party has expelled those who did not accept its full program, just as if these organizations were so many Communist parties (and parties with an unhealthy, undemocratic inner regime at that!). The International Labor Defense, supposed to include and defend workers of all

political tendencies suffering persecution for labor activities, has expelled 'Trotskyites' and 'Lovestoneites', and has even expelled those who, knowing no 'isms', have criticized some act of an official. They have refused to defend Opposition Communists arrested on the picket line!

All these organizations have their officers handed down to them, by decision of the Communist fraction or the Central Committee, their funds voted by hand-picked officials for Party purposes without troubling to get the consent of the membership, decisions made for them before they meet and no discussion or criticism permitted, the persistent discussers and critics being branded as 'Lovestoneites', though they never heard of Lovestone, and then being expelled. Hence it is not hard to understand why the foreign-language organizations (Finnish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, etc.) have split, and all Communist-bossed organizations have dwindled into mere diluted replicas of the Party. Membership in them is a kind of substitute or second-hand membership in a substitute or second-hand Communist party with few duties and no rights.

Faith of the Dual Unions

In the Communist-controlled 'unions' (the shoe workers' union, the National Miners' Union, Needle Trades Workers' Industrial Union, Food Workers' Industrial Union, etc.), the situation is even worse. They exist only on paper. They include only Communists (not all eligible Party members even are in them!) and a few close sympathisers who regard membership as a second-hand Party membership. Everything is decided by orders from above and the chief functions of these unions are to try to split mass unions, to call rival strikes when AFL unions call strikes, to offer sometimes 'cheaper terms' of settlement to get boss recognition (Paterson, the New York dress strike, etc.), to divide the unity of the workers, and to pull every awakening worker out of the existing unions as soon as he becomes friendly to the cause of Communism.

5. Should Communists Work in Reactionary Unions?

Our answer is unqualifiedly: 'Yes!' The AFL and other conservative unions contain more than three million workers. They are the overwhelming majority of the organized workers in this country. The Communists must not voluntarily separate themselves from these workers, nor split off the more progressive sections of them, nor abandon the backward ones to their reactionary leaders. The policy of dual unionism, of setting up 'red' unions containing only the Communists and their closest sympathisers, of deserting the conservative unions, of splitting them, of skimming off the 'cream' by pulling out small groups of workers as soon as they become progressive or radical, of forming 'pure', virginal, revolutionary organizations instead of working from within to transform the existing craft unions into militant industrial unions – such is the policy of the official Communist Party. For opposing this policy, more than for any other difference, the Communist Opposition was expelled.

Yet the policy of union splitting and sect forming has been tried many times and found wanting. It was tried in the days of the Knights of Labor by sectarian Socialist immigrants from Germany, and was sharply condemned by Engels.

To friends in America Engels wrote:

It is far more important that the movement should spread, proceed harmoniously, take root and *embrace* as much as possible *the whole American proletariat*, than that it should start and proceed from the beginning on theoretically perfectly correct lines . . . *The great thing is to get the 'working class to move as a class:* that once obtained they will soon find the right direction and all who resist . . . will be left in the cold with small sects of their own. Therefore I think also the Knights of Labor a most important factor in the movement *which ought not to be pooh-poohed from without but to be revolutionized from within.*¹⁴

14 Editors' note: Engels 1965, p. 398.

Union splitting as the road to revolutionary unionism was tried again in the days of Daniel De Leon, with results disastrous to the Socialist Labor Party, which degenerated into a little union-splitting sect, separated from the broad labor movement. This movement became more conservative due to the De Leonite bloodletting that had drained it of some of its best blood.

The fatal policy was tried once more in the first days of the Communist movement in this and other countries, and called forth Lenin's powerful argument against sectarianism, embodied in his great pamphlet on Communist tactics, *Left Communism: An Infantile Sickness*. Lenin wrote:

The Communists . . . must join such unions in all countries in order to make of them efficient and conscious organs of struggle for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of Communism . . . Any voluntary withdrawal from the economic movement, any artificial attempt to organize special unions . . . threatens to isolate the most advanced and most conscious workers from the masses who are on the road to Communism. It threatens to hand over these masses to the opportunist leaders thus playing into the hands of the bourgeoisie. . . . Communists must on no account leave the ranks of the reactionary federation of labor. On the contrary, they should go into the old trade unions in order to revolutionize them.¹⁵

With irresistible logic, Lenin answered all our 'profound' arguments (the writer of these lines was once a dual-unionist on principle, as were all the founders of the Communist Party at that time) and he answered in advance all the 'profound' arguments that the present leaders of the Party have been able to invent, or rather drag out of their graves.

'It is difficult to work in the reactionary unions . . .' So is it difficult to overthrow capitalism. The question is: Is it necessary?

'We will lose our purity . . .' Communists who worry about their virginity had better give up being Communists.

'The leaders of the AFL want to expel us . . .' Of course! They want to separate us at all costs from the backward workers. But is it not strange that reactionary bureaucrats and Communist leaders should agree in wanting the Communists out of the regular trade unions!

15 *Editors' note:* We have been unable to locate the exact quotation Wolfe offers here, which may be from an early translation (or from his own translation of the Russian text), but the general points made can be found in Lenin 1960-79a, pp. 49-56.

'It is hard to work in unions controlled by reactionaries and gangsters ...' The Bolsheviks worked in unions organized and officered by the Czar's police! – and worked so well that these unions (the 'Zubatovschina') led a general strike in Odessa.

The Bolsheviks did not appear as union splitters either before, during or after the Russian Revolution!

So the problem is no new one. It is not as if the matter had not been argued out and analysed before! The curse of the American labor movement has been the bloodletting process of dual unionism.

That 'Change of Line'

Today, under the fire of our criticism and the pressure of our example, coupled with the patent failure of their policies, the leaders of the Party pretend to beat a shamefaced and hesitant retreat. They have launched a whispering campaign about a 'change of line'.

'Don't go over to the Lovestoneites. We are changing our line. We recognise that we have been neglecting (!) the work in the reactionary trade unions. We are correcting this ...'

They publish long theses about 'mistakes' in trade union work, and then repeat the same 'mistakes'. They adopt resolutions against 'neglecting' the work in the reactionary unions and then send a handful of workers into one or another AFL union, not to seek to rebuild and transform the old unions, but *to undermine and disrupt, to make new and 'more successful' splits*, to urge each worker, as soon as he becomes a bit sympathetic, to leave the old mass union and go into the rival paper union.

They do not even take the *first step* toward a genuine change of line. They do not give up their dual unions! Every Communist who enters a mass union of the American Federation of Labor enters loaded with the weight of an awful handicap – he has been sent in to split off fragments, to 'build the rival Red union' by 'boring from within'. The average worker who has developed enough class consciousness to be loyal to the unity of his union sees in the Communist not a builder but a splitter, not a unifier and organizer but a disrupter and divider. Therefore, it is easy for the reactionary leaders to expel the Communists with the whole-hearted approval of the union members!

The Communist Opposition proposes that the party abandon its stupid and suicidal tactics of union splitting and bloodletting, of deserting organizations because they are not yet militant enough. We propose to liquidate all

the artificial 'revolutionary unions' that exist only on paper and that serve no real purpose except to help the reactionaries in their expulsion campaigns, and to separate the Communists from the rest of the organized workers. We propose to end the situation where the Communists appear as union splitters and restore the state of affairs in which the Communists appear as the banner bearers of trade union and working-class unity. And the Communist Opposition, besides striving to correct this false and dangerous course, shows by example in the daily struggle, both to party members and the working class as a whole, that the true Communist policy is not union splitting but union organizing and rebuilding. The other path is the 'easier' one, but it leads away from working-class and Communist progress. It leads into the blind alley of sectarianism and isolation!

6. The United Front (*The Fight for Working-Class Unity*)

The unity of great masses of workers on an elementary program expressing their immediate need would immeasurably strengthen the workers, give them a feeling of power such as comes with numbers, give them a sense of class solidarity and common interest, enable them to enter into struggles out of which they would learn more than out of years of preachment and abuse. Such proposals of unity to other organizations of the workers, on the basis of an elementary or minimum program, with each participating group retaining its own separate organization and full program, such a first step toward working-class unity, is known as a 'united front'. The Communist Party has in the past been the most energetic champion of such united struggles.

But in the last few years there has grown up a disposition to treat the united front as a mere clever maneuver to win following away from the reactionary leaders. Naturally, when we propose unity to the leaders of conservative working-class organizations, Socialist Party or AFL unions, one of the important 'by-products' of our fight for working-class unity is the exposure of the reactionary leaders. If they reject the united front proposal, they expose themselves as enemies of working-class unity and united struggle. If, in response to the pressure of their followers, they accept the proposal and then do not carry on an effective fight for the program of the united front, they again expose themselves in the eyes of their followers, who can be won away to the support of the Communists as the only genuine fighters for the elementary interests of the working class. But we cannot too strongly emphasise that the Communists must not make united front proposals merely as clever maneuvers to win away workers from reactionary leadership. Such 'clever maneuvers' are seen through by everybody. They do not promote working-class unity but earn contempt for Communism as a species of sharp practice, of juggling with the longing of the working class for greater unity and strength.

The 'United Front from Below'

For the last few years, the Communist Party has abandoned the united front altogether. No more does the Party embarrass the leaders of the Socialist Party and other labor organizations by tireless insistence on working-class unity on a program which even the most backward worker can appreciate and be roused to fight for. No more does the Party battle earnestly and tirelessly for the unity of the working class. 'If the backward workers won't follow us', runs the present official attitude, 'then they are reactionaries and social fascists'. And so the Party cuts itself off voluntarily from the workers who still have faith in the leaders of the conservative labor organizations.

Dishonest Juggling

Yet the Party leaders dare not openly repudiate the time-honored tactics of the united front. Just as they disguise their attempt to split the mass unions by calling it 'work in the reactionary unions', so they disguise their repudiation of the united front by speaking of the 'united front from below'.

What is this famous 'united front from below'? It is an invitation to the non-Communist workers to support the Communist Party! That is all! In short, the 'united front from below' is no united front at all. And such dishonest juggling with terms prevents any real discussion of the most complicated tactical problems confronting the party, the problems arising from entrance into united fronts with organizations under reactionary leadership.

The crying need of the German working class during the last few years has been a united front of all workers to fight Fascism. The Communist Party, which should have been the driving force for such a united struggle, fought against it. The Socialist leaders were therefore able to herd their followers into a united front with Hindenburg and Bruening 'against' Fascism. They were even able to capitalise on the working-class longing for unity. 'The Communists do not want a united front', said Breitscheid. 'If they did maybe we would not have to unite with Hindenburg'. A fine state of affairs when the Social-Democratic leaders can pretend that they are the apostles of unity!

In the United States, Norman Thomas was enabled to play the same game: 'If Communists were less dogmatically proud of fooling their allies', Thomas wrote in the *New Leader*, 'and would work in good faith, there might be some chance in Germany and elsewhere for occasional Socialist-Communist joint action'. But since they won't, says Thomas, therefore, 'I think the German

Social-Democrats are justified in coalition (with Hindenburg and Bruening) in this emergency’.

How does the *Daily Worker* answer this ‘justification’ of the Social-Democratic treachery?

‘The Communists formed and carried out a policy of joint action – *but only joint action with the Socialists and non-party workers*. The Communists have not formed and will not form a *united front with the Social-Democratic leaders*.¹⁶

In other words, the *Daily Worker* deliberately confuses the invitation of Socialist workers to join the Communists, with the united front of the two organizations.

The Communist Party of the United States will also have a ‘united front’ in the Presidential elections, the editorial continues: ‘*It will do this by bringing about joint action in the struggle of all workers and farmers, including the rank and file members of the Socialist party and the A.F. of L.*’

In other words, it will actually permit Socialists and members of the AFL unions to vote for Foster and call it a united front! ‘The National Nominating convention . . . , has its doors wide open to all toilers and to those ready to fight for the demands put forward in the Convention Call. Here joint action [since when is a Communist platform ‘joint action’ or subject for a ‘united front’?] will be decided upon, candidates chosen and a fighting platform drafted. All workers are invited’.

What has this word juggling to do with ‘joint action’, this anti-Communist suggestion that the full program of Communism is subject to drafting by united front, what has all this charlatanry to do with the united front?

How Do They Get that Way?

How, the bewildered reader may ask, could such ruinous, sectarian tactics ever get adopted by the Party of working-class unity? The answer is strange and yet simple: ‘In the Soviet Union there are no other parties but the Communist Party’ – there can be no united front except with the non-party workers ‘from below and around the Communist Party’.

In the same way, there are no unions but revolutionary unions in the USSR, and no problem of working in reactionary unions. Once more our comrades are mechanically transporting Russian conditions and tactics into America, and acting as if there were no other parties, as if all reactionary leaders were

16 ‘Editorial’, *Daily Worker* 26 April 1932.

discredited, and as if the American Communist Party was the undisputed leader of the many million-headed American working class.

The Communist Opposition works to establish united fronts and demands the return of the party to the tactics of the united front. The party can make no real progress till it again becomes the genuine champion of working-class unity through united fronts of struggle for elementary working-class needs.

7. On Discipline

The conditions of the class struggle change from day to day, and even a correct line becomes wrong unless it is subject to frequent examination and criticism. If members are afraid to voice objection and criticism, if analysis, whether correct or incorrect, is met not with argument and clarification, but with abuse and expulsion, then the party stagnates and grows corrupt, bureaucracy flourishes as a rank growth that chokes the party's life, and a system of Jesuitic hierarchy and rigidity takes the place of the democratic centralism of Communist Party structure.

'Democratic centralism' is a term with two poles. Party democracy implies full and free discussion by every Party member. It implies a free play of viewpoints on all questions of tactics and strategy and general line, so long as there is no departure on fundamentals, no abandonment of the basic principles of Communism. Party democracy implies the selection of all officials by the membership (in an illegal party this is not always possible) and complete accountability of these officials to the membership, which remains the supreme power in the Party.

On the other hand, the Communist Party, as a party of action and not a perpetual debating society, must set terms to Party discussions, limits at which a discussion should stop and decisions be made by the membership. Thereafter, there must be a subordination of the minority to the majority on the point in question, until the question is again subject to examination, as, for instance, during a convention discussion period.

Such, in brief, are the mechanics of democratic centralism. Yet there is not a point in the above outline that is not systematically violated in the present life of the Party. The line of the Party is not subject to examination. Critics and questioners do not have their views examined, accepted or patiently refuted, but are met with a flood of abuse, threats and expulsion. Comrades are expelled not for differences on fundamentals (proletarian dictatorship and Soviet power) but for questioning the correctness of tactical measures or the limitless wisdom of Party officials. The membership, after a thorough discussion, voted by 90 percent for a given line and leadership at the Sixth National Convention of our party, but the leadership was removed, the decisions of the

membership reversed and over a third of the Central Committee expelled by cable decree 'from above'.

Expulsion and slander were substituted for discussion and conviction, and raised to the dignity of a system. To doubt the wisdom of abandoning the trade unions or the united front, was to earn the epithets 'renegade', 'counterrevolutionist', 'agent of Hoover', 'social fascist', 'enemy of the Soviet Union'. The *Daily Worker* and the *Freiheit* even published weird stories of alleged burglary of the national office, stealing of funds, stool-pigeons, consorting with gangsters, and what-not lurid slanders in the best style of the *Jewish Daily Forward* or the tabloid press.

Lenin once characterised such methods in this way: 'There is one method of a corrupt press that has everywhere and always proved itself useful and "infallible" above all others; lies, shouts, slanders, repetitions of lies . . . , "something will stick!" . . . The heroes who use such methods are already through'.

But the Party bureaucrats have gone farther – even to the point of breaking up, or trying to break up, discussion meetings by force, as if cracking heads were a convincing way of reaching the brains of comrades who differed with them!

Why the resort to such methods? The answer is very simple: *Discussion must be avoided at all costs. The present line of the Party will not bear examination!*

The Question of Discipline

Inner-party democracy is a key to the growth of a mass party. An unhealthy inner line makes impossible the winning and assimilation of new members. No one is born fully Communist and new members naturally come in with doubts and questions and suggestions. If they are met with patient explanation and comradely discussion, they can be made into fully developed Communists. If not, they are alienated and repulsed. During the past three years, it is not true that the party has been unable to attract new members. But it has been unable to *hold* them! By its own records, over forty-five thousand workers have joined the party since 1929 and over fifty thousand have left it! The result is a net loss – a loss that is directly attributable to the errors of the party and the unhealthy condition of its inner life.

The enemies of Communism have always tried to attack Communist discipline and to pretend that it is a mere matter of orders from above and obedience from below. In the measure that the Party leaders have reduced discipline to such a caricature, they have given ammunition to our enemies and checked the stream of movement toward our party.

Lenin on Discipline

The discipline of Communism is not discipline based upon threat, but upon conviction. We are a voluntary association for a common cause, a cause which enlists our enthusiasm and devotion. Therefore, the primary consideration, the foundation of all discipline, is a correctness of line and the convincing of all members of its correctness. Without these, discipline is a grotesque caricature.

Here is how Lenin put the question of discipline:

Upon what does the discipline of the revolutionary party of the proletariat rest? How is it tested, controlled, reinforced, strengthened?

First: by the clarity of aim of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the revolution, by its steadiness, spirit of self-sacrifice and heroism.

Second: by its ability to lead the toiling masses, to form contact with them and to a certain extent to fuse itself with the proletarian masses primarily but also with the non-proletarian toilers.

Thirdly: the correctness of the political leadership carried out and by the correctness of its political strategy and tactics, based on the idea that the workers convince THEMSELVES of the soundness of this political leadership, strategy and tactics thru their own experience. *Without all these conditions, discipline in a revolutionary party of the advanced class whose object is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and revolutionize all of society, is impossible of realization. Without these conditions, all attempts to create discipline result in empty phrases, in tomfoolery, in clownishness.*¹⁷

Thus Lenin makes the correctness of the line of the party *the very basis of discipline* and not discipline a substitute for a correct line. To Gorki he also wrote: 'You must and certainly will understand that once a member of a party is convinced of the absolute incorrectness and harm of a certain doctrine, he is duty bound to take a stand against it . . . AT ALL COSTS'.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Editors' note:* for a slightly different translation, see Lenin 1960–79a, pp. 24–5.

¹⁸ *Editors' note:* for a slightly different translation, see Lenin 1973a, p. 38.

8. What is to be Done?

The object of a Communist is not merely to 'belong', not merely to have a Party card in his pocket, but to build the Party. The Party is not a church calling for blind faith, nor a Society of Jesuits calling for unthinking obedience to superiors; it is a revolutionary Party to be built, to be strengthened, to be made into a mass party, to be linked up indissolubly with the masses, to give correct leadership, to guide on the path that leads to working-class victory.

The Communist sympathiser may well say: 'My party right or wrong', for the Communist Party is the only hope of the working class. But there is a far higher, far more Communist loyalty, which says: 'I'll keep my Party right at all costs', for it is the hope of the working class only if it leads aright, if it pursues the policies that make it grow and will give it victory. It is a poor Communist, indeed, that does not know how, or that does not dare, to transform the slogan: 'My Party right or wrong', into the genuine Communist stand: 'My Party must be right! I'll fight like hell to keep it right – and, when it goes wrong, I'll fight harder still to set it right again'.

That is the meaning of the Communist Opposition. We did not choose expulsion! Too many of the best years of our lives went into the building of the Communist Party; it means too much to us for us to accept expulsion lightly. Yet we would have been cowards and traitors to Communism if we had seen our Party set on the wrong track, isolated from the masses, following paths that lead away from growth and ultimate victory, and remained quiet just so that we might hold onto Party cards or Party posts. For a while we wavered between loyalty to the Party's true interests and the keeping of our Party cards at the expense of treason to the interests of the party. We offered to obey mechanical discipline, to carry out the line we found so harmful, until a new discussion should open.

But the Party bureaucrats helped us to decide. The new puppet leadership did not dare face a discussion. The new line could not bear examination. So they split the party, and forced us to carry on our fight for a healthier party outside of the regular Party channels. We have never recognised our expulsion. An examination of our organ, *Workers Age*, will show how loyally we have carried on our fight for a better Party in the face of shameless provocation and abuse.

The bureaucratic action of the Party officials combined with the needs of the Party to make us understand the difficult decision of Lenin as written to Gorki: 'You must and certainly will understand that once a member of the party is convinced of the absolute incorrectness and harm of a certain doctrine, he is duty bound to take a stand against it . . . at all costs'.

A Word to Hesitators

The Party officials did not limit themselves to the expulsion of conscious elements fighting to correct the line of the Party. They expelled hundreds for merely questioning or doubting. They repulsed thousands by their stupid tactics. They demoralised countless loyal, old members who grew disgusted and dropped out. These forces stand now on the sidelines watching our struggles and the Party's blunders, demoralised, without hope. They wish for the correction of the Party line as for a miracle, but they do nothing about it. To them I say, quoting an old proverb: 'Expect poison from standing water'.

Look out lest you wait so long away from the stream of struggle that you indeed become a stagnant pool. 'He who desires, but acts not, breeds pestilence'. The true Communist is one whose desire is harnessed to his will and directed by his understanding. The sooner you join us and the harder you work with us, the sooner will our fight be crowned with victory and the painful period of Party blunder and isolation be over, the sooner will Party unity be restored and the Party begin to go forward.

On Communist Unity

The Communist Opposition stands unswervingly for the reuniting of the Communist movement. There are two possible roads to unity. One is the road offered by the official leadership of the Party and the International. First, we are asked to denounce ourselves as 'renegades' and 'counterrevolutionists', and thereby proclaim our 'fitness' for membership and end our usefulness to the working class forever. Second, we are asked to drop our struggle for the correction of the line of the Party and thereby connive at the injury that the present leadership is doing to the Party and the cause of Communism.

The other road to unity, our road, is the road of restoration of Party democracy, a full and free discussion of differences in the Party and the International. We do not insist that the Party accept our line as a condition for unity. We abide confidently by the results of any untrammelled discussion of the issues.

How Long Will it Take?

Many Party members and sympathisers have come to us expressing agreement with our views, demanding 'guarantees' that if they joined us, it would be a short fight. 'How long?' was the constant burden of their inquiries.

We cannot honestly give any promises as to the length of the fight. We can only point out that the fight is necessary, that the Party cannot grow nor give real leadership to the American working class, till it shakes off the curse of its wrong, sectarian, union wrecking, isolating line. Long or short, the fight must be made, must be fought to a finish.

All we can answer to such queries is: come in and help us and the fight will be shorter. The more there are of us, inside the Party and out, the quicker we will win, the sooner this painful period of reorientation and reconstruction will be over. Therefore, if you are truly a Communist, if you are more than a 'church member', if you are not content to ignore and condone the errors of our Party just for the sake of being a 'card holder', at any price, even at the price of injury to the Party, then you will raise a struggle inside the ranks of the Party to set it straight, and, inside or out, you will join with us in the struggle for the reunification of the Party and the Communist International, for the future of the Party and the Comintern, for the building of a powerful section of the Communist International in the United States, a Communist Party truly equal to its tasks, the defeat of the most powerful ruling class on the face of the earth.

Politics, Activism and Marxism of the Lovestone Group

Paul Le Blanc

The subtitle of Jay Lovestone's biography captures essential elements of his story – *Communist, Anti-Communist, and Spymaster*.¹ Once the central leader of US Communism, Lovestone was deposed when he crossed swords with the new leader of world Communism, Joseph Stalin, in 1929. He then led a dissident Communist group whose anti-Stalinism soured into a thoroughgoing anti-Communism by the end of the 1930s, when the group dissolved.

The Lovestone group's most prominent leaders seemed to live up to the epithet pinned on them by their Stalinist opponents – *renegade*. Lovestone ended up overseeing a Cold War anti-Communist foreign policy of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) in the 1950s and 1960s, and he was up to his elbows in operations of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). His second-in-command, Bertram D. Wolfe, became an influential anti-Communist ideologue working for the US State Department, helping to head up the Voice of America, among other things. Will Herberg, editor of the group's paper, *Workers Age*, abandoned Marxism to become a Jewish theologian and a very active editorial board member of the conservative journal, *National Review*.²

What the Lovestone group represented, however, as it went through its various organisational and political incarnations from 1929 to 1940, was something much more complex and interesting. The Communist Party USA (Majority Group) essentially claimed to be the 'true' Communist Party, an orientation maintained with a somewhat more critical edge by its successor, the Communist Party Opposition. By 1937–8, however, it went through two name changes – Independent Communist Labor League, and Independent Labor

¹ Morgan 1999.

² Lovestone, Wolfe and Herberg deserve additional scholarly attention. On Wolfe, see his posthumously edited and incomplete autobiography, Wolfe 1981, and Hessen (ed.) 1990; his best-known work is the classic *Three Who Made a Revolution* (Wolfe 1948). Herberg is intelligently discussed in Diggins 1975, pp. 118–59, 269–302, 360–9, and Ausmus 1987. His major religious writings can be found in Herberg 1951 and Herberg 1976.

League of America – which indicated an increasingly dramatic break with its earlier orientation, leading to its dissolution at the end of 1940.

In fact, for most of its existence outside the Communist Party, the Lovestone group optimistically anticipated being brought back into a reformed and reunified Communist mainstream – and initially it was able to offer cogent criticisms (reflecting the moderate dissent of Nikolai Bukharin within the Soviet leadership) of ultra-left and sectarian policies, initiated by the Communist International under the consolidated leadership of Joseph Stalin – policies that were certainly leading US Communists and others into a dead-end. The problem, however, as Communist veteran Peggy Dennis recalled, was a political naiveté in which ‘we eloquently echoed Stalin’s published denunciations of Bukharinism and Trotskyism without even objecting to the fact that we were not allowed to read what Bukharin or Trotsky had said or written’.³

Many of those not in the Communist Party, but moving leftward under the radicalising impact of the Great Depression and other developments in the 1930s, went the way of George Blake Charney, who listened to a debate between Lovestoneite Bertram D. Wolfe and Stalinist V.J. Jerome and decided to go with the Stalinists: ‘I was in no position to judge their respective arguments on Marxism. Both were learned men’, Charney recalled. ‘In the end I was drawn to the position of the [official Communist] party because it was positive and forward-looking, whereas Wolfe was carping and negative and offered so little hope at a time when we needed so much’.⁴

Such barriers to the success of their initially optimistic orientation were not the only factors frustrating Lovestoneite perspectives. There were deeper problems that would profoundly challenge their political convictions.

Drives and Motivations

Among the fundamental reasons for the shifts in the politics of the Lovestone group were the experiences of its members in the ten years of struggle during the Great Depression. There were inspiring struggles of the diverse sectors of the working class against oppression, and of the organised labour movement for elementary social and economic justice, to be sure. But there was also the failure of any sector of the working class to carry out the hoped-for socialist revolution anywhere in the world, coupled with what seemed like the decline and disintegration of the organised working-class movement and almost all

3 Dennis 1977, p. 70.

4 Charney 1968, p. 23.

left-wing currents throughout Europe in the face of triumphant dictatorships and a fast-approaching Second World War. And most devastating of all, there was the horrific degeneration of the Russian Revolution of 1917 (which had so deeply inspired them), and what turned out to be the murderous policies of Stalin's 1928–35 modernising 'revolution from above' (which they had supported), capped by bloody purges and forced-labour camps (which they initially had denied, justified and apologised for – before actually comprehending it all and turning away in revulsion).

In the late 1940s, a fellow ex-Communist turned anti-Communist, Arthur Koestler, asked Bertram Wolfe: 'What was it, Bert, that you hated in yourself, that made you join the Communist Party?' To which Wolfe answered:

I did not join the Communist Party. I was one of its founders, and if we note the date of the founding of the Left Wing [of the Socialist Party of America] and of its call for a 'New International', I can count myself as one of the founders of the Communist International. Nothing that I hated in myself could have made me join such a party, nor could I have joined it when it became the party which approved the blood purges. What I hated was total war, and America's entrance into it.⁵

As with other early US Communists, Wolfe not only hated the massive slaughter of the First World War and the imperialism that had generated it – he also hated 'injustice wherever I found it', becoming active 'in the fight for equal rights for blacks' and in opposing such things as 'the ferocity and lawlessness of the Red Raids [carried out by the US government in 1919–20], the brutality of the company-controlled police and officials in some of the company towns when we tried to enter to unionize them, and the prevailing habit of our governments, local and national, to break strikes by injunction against picket lines and the use of police and national guard to break them up'.⁶

Wolfe expressed the feelings of many of his early Communist comrades in asserting that 'however much we were inspired by Lenin's success in Russia and the revolutionary movements that seemed to be sweeping through Central Europe, we had not thought of becoming a mere adjunct and agency of the Russian Communist party'. Rather, their goal was to carry out a liberating transformation of their own country, overcoming oppression and exploitation while engaging with their own country's traditions – 'what had to be fought, purified, and reformed. We improvised from day to day; everything we

5 Wolfe 1981, pp. 229–30.

6 Wolfe 1981, p. 419.

did, even that which was imitative or silly, seemed to us exciting, appropriate, spontaneous, and new'. He added that he and many other US Communists of the early 1920s 'felt that we were an American party that recognized large elements in our American heritage that were precious and worthy of conserving, enlarging and building upon', seeing communications from such leaders of the Communist International as Zinoviev and Lenin as 'intended only as helpful suggestions, often as exciting ones, and as successful examples to imitate, after adapting them to American conditions, but not as categorical commands'.⁷

By the mid-1920s, however, Wolfe (after helping to build the Mexican Communist Party) returned to the United States to find the party embroiled in a fierce factional dispute – with tough politicians Charles Ruthenberg and Jay Lovestone leading one side, confronted by trade-union veterans William Z. Foster and James P. Cannon on the other. At first conciliatory, Wolfe said to Foster:

At heart I am an opponent of factionalism and believe that in the party there is a place for you in the leadership and for Lovestone and Ruthenberg in the leadership. You are the Party's most experienced trade union leader, and Lovestone, I think, is its best political leader. You ought to be working together . . .

But the factional war continued unabated, and Wolfe, joining Lovestone's faction, soon discovered that factional disputes simmering among the Russian Communists, after Lenin's death, were spilling over into the Communist International – which initially chose Lovestone as 'its' champion, only to cast him aside a few years later, as Stalin consolidated his power. Such developments caused the idealism of many to turn to bitter disillusionment. A founder of US Communism who never broke from its early ideals was James P. Cannon. Recounting the organisation's political and moral degeneration, he commented that 'writing about the dark period from 1925 on is tough, but it was tougher to live through without sliding into cynicism as did so many others – good companions in earlier endeavors'.⁸

The Lovestoneite break from the Communist mainstream in 1929 seems to represent positive qualities. First, there was the rejection of a set of destructive policies, reflecting an extreme ultra-leftism, imposed on Communist parties around the world, within the Communist International. This imposition took place after Stalin and those around him consolidated their hold over the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1928. Second, there was an insistence

7 Wolfe 1981, p. 229.

8 Wolfe 1981, p. 379; Cannon 1962, p. 138.

that the specific policies of Communist Parties in each country should be developed by the members of each of those parties – based on the specific realities, experiences and judgments of those comrades. They should be operating within a common revolutionary Marxist framework, to be sure, but not dictated to by the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In fact, the Lovestone delegation to Moscow in 1929 was motivated not by a desire to split, but to help the Communist International move along a pathway toward political health. Gitlow later recalled: ‘we believed that we would succeed in convincing Stalin that we were the rightful leaders of the American movement and deserving of his support’. Members of at least some other parties in the Comintern were hopeful that ‘perhaps the fight that the American Party would put up would end the system of vassalage to the Russian leadership on the part of the other parties’.⁹

And yet, Lovestone’s political reputation was not that of a highly principled revolutionary. Allowing for the existence of factional prejudice against him, there are too many negative characterisations of Lovestone to ignore. ‘There is no doubt that Lovestone had charisma’, notes historian Robert J. Alexander, who adds that ‘he was capable of engendering great loyalty and devotion on the one hand, and strong dislike and even hatred, on the other’. As one thoughtful female comrade, Theresa Wolfson (one of many attracted by him) wrote to Lovestone in 1925: ‘All your passions, loves and hates are wedded to the Communist movement’, adding: ‘My own deep feeling about you is that you would be far more effective and have a greater following if you could make yourself be more human, less bitter (it’s that deep-seated personal bitterness of yours that often frightens me)’.¹⁰

Lovestone came into the Communist movement as a capable, talented, college-educated youth, ‘energetic, affable ... grooming himself with boundless push to become a Party leader’, whose obvious abilities and ambition meant that he ‘insulated himself at the top’ of the organisation, as one observant comrade later commented. ‘He was a fluent speaker at mass meetings, but cold, aloof, unconvincing; in caucuses, especially when plotting intrigues, he was excellent’. Sporting ‘a professional grin intended to be the warm, human smile of the “leader of men”’, he also had ‘a curious way of derogating fellow communists while flattering the person to whom he talked. This comrade was a fool, that one an idiot, the third a jackass, the fourth a half-wit, the fifth a Menshevik’. Far from being simply idle gossip, such a mode of functioning was part of a strategy. Confidentially sharing such information with a variety

9 Gitlow 1940, pp. 524, 528.

10 Alexander 1981, p. 36; Morgan 1999, pp. 52–3.

of individuals – and assuring his specific listener that these fools and idiots and jackasses had negative attitudes toward the individual he was speaking to – contributed to his developing ‘confidential’ bonds with a number of individuals. ‘Soon strategy became arrogance’, and Lovestone ‘got into the habit of referring to the Party rank and file as the “rank and filth”, and called his close adherents “my lieutenants, captains and marshals” ...’ Cannon comments that Ben Gitlow ‘was conditioned by his association with Lovestone to assume, as a matter of course, that whenever two or more people got their heads together something was being cooked up for their personal advantage’.¹¹

Cannon certainly had the Lovestone faction in mind as he reminisced about the degeneration of the US Communist Party many years later, in part because of the destructively factional internal situation, and in part because of Comintern meddling. ‘Many good militants succumbed to factionalism and lost their bearings altogether. It is only a short step from cynicism to renegacy’, he mused. ‘Betrayal of principle in little things leads to betrayal in bigger things.’¹² It is quite revealing, however, that the old revolutionary was not inclined simply to dismiss the younger Lovestone and those around him:

All the original leaders of the early Communist Party, who later split into three permanent factions within the party [i.e., those associated with Lovestone, those associated with William Z. Foster, and those associated with Cannon], began as American revolutionists with a perspective of revolution in this country ...

Even if it is maintained that some of these leaders were careerists – a contention their later evolution tends to support – it still remains to be explained why they sought careers in the communist movement and not in the business or professional worlds, or in bourgeois politics, or in the trade union officialdom. Opportunities in these fields were open to at least some of them, and were deliberately cast aside at the time.

In my opinion, the course of the leaders of American communism in its pioneer days, a course which entailed deprivation, hazards and penalties, can be explained only by the assumption that they were revolutionists to begin with; and that even the careerists among them believed in

11 Freeman 1936, p. 297; Cannon 1962, p. 175. Although Freeman utilises a false name and physical description in his discussion of Lovestone’s negative qualities, it is clear from material in Cannon 1962 and Morgan 1999 that he and they are describing the same person (for example, see Cannon 1962, pp. 115, 155–6, and Morgan 1999, pp. 12, 14, 16, 18, 25, 36, 50, 52–3, 69, 370, 372).

12 Cannon 1962, p. 152.

the future of the workers' revolution in America and wished to ally themselves with this future.¹³

The various incarnations of the post-1929 Lovestone group were certainly not replications of the Lovestone faction which functioned within, and at one point actually led, the US Communist Party. In the latter-day incarnations, 'party discipline was fairly loose, and few people were ever expelled from the organization', writes Robert J. Alexander, who goes on to assert that 'there is little evidence that Lovestone behaved ruthlessly towards his colleagues in the Communist Opposition', and that 'there was wide latitude to disagree not only with Lovestone, but with all leaders of the group'.¹⁴

It can be argued, however, that there was considerable residue from the 'old days' in the post-1929 Lovestone group – manipulative and factional modes of functioning, a Marxism marked by an opportunistic bent and by initial adaptations to Stalinist ideology, and other negative tendencies existing more generally within the 1930s Left.

Whatever the limitations, however, it remains the case that here was a group of critical-minded and revolutionary-minded activists, attempting to utilise Marxist theory in order to build mass opposition against all forms of oppression and war, to overcome racism and imperialism, to replace capitalist exploitation with socialist democracy. In the course of the 1930s they accomplished some things of importance and had significant influence among some who were committed to the cause of social and economic justice. And yet they failed, passed out of existence as a would-be revolutionary force, with some of them seeming to turn into the opposite of what they had been.

Scholars as well as activists have something to learn from their accomplishments and failures. The purpose of this volume is to contribute to such a process of understanding.

American Exceptionalists

Lovestoneites, as they were called, have also been credited with developing the influential notion of 'American Exceptionalism'. Wikipedia tells us:

American exceptionalism is the proposition that the United States is different from other countries in that it has a specific world mission to

13 Cannon 1962, p. 36.

14 Alexander 1981, p. 36.

spread liberty and democracy. It is not a notion that the United States is quantitatively better than other countries or that it has a superior culture, but rather that it is 'qualitatively different' ... The term 'American exceptionalism' has been in use since at least the 1920s and saw more common use after Soviet leader Joseph Stalin chastised members of the Jay Lovestone-led faction of the American Communist Party for their heretical belief that America was independent of the Marxist laws of history 'thanks to its natural resources, industrial capacity, and absence of rigid class distinctions'. American Communists then started using the English translation in factional fights.¹⁵

This requires a correction. No one inside the leadership of the US Communist Party, certainly not Lovestone at that time, could assert that 'America is independent of the Marxist laws of history'. A more reasonable summary is offered by someone who, at the time, was a Communist opponent of the Lovestone faction when it dominated the organisation. 'They were fascinated by the expanding strength of American capitalism' of the 1920s, recalled James P. Cannon. 'They pictured it as entering its "Victorian Day"' – that is, becoming the leading industrial-capitalist power as England had done during the reign of Queen Victoria – 'and drew from that perspective their theory of "American exceptionalism". They foresaw no economic crisis on the American horizon and consequently no prospects for a radicalization of the American working class'.¹⁶

The 1970 memoir of Len De Caux, a prominent left-wing activist in the Congress of Industrial Organizations during the 1930s, spoke of Lovestone as 'conspiratorial, devious, bitter, factional, chock full of ulterior motives', and yet, in personal interactions that they had in the late 1920s – meeting more than once over meals (when he was a Communist sympathiser and Lovestone the top Communist) – De Caux confesses to being impressed with 'his easy manners, his plausibility, even some sense of humor', concluding: 'It was easy to talk with Lovestone; a good listener, he readily understood what one had in mind'. De Caux claims he was startled, however, by what he perceived as Lovestone's political moderation:

15 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_exceptionalism). Friedman 2012 makes similar points on 'how a phrase coined by Joseph Stalin became shorthand for who loves America more' – available online at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/06/18/american_exceptionalism.

16 Cannon 1962, p. 183.

When I complained of American communists being extremist, romantic, impossibilist, Lovestone agreed. He took my words – though some must have been both ignorant and unfair – and made them stronger. If I urged a little caution, moderation, possibilism, he called for more than I had in mind. Lovestone was then on his ‘American exceptionalism’ binge, theorizing that American capitalism differed from other capitalisms and was just going up and up. This was two years before the Great Depression.

When we talked, I thought Lovestone was getting carried away. In effect, he annulled the class struggle, sidetracked socialism, deplored nearly everything the American communists did. At last, I said:

‘The way you put it, there’s hardly any point to having an American Communist party’.

‘Maybe there isn’t’, said he.¹⁷

Yet a serious examination of the materials of the Lovestone group indicate that, at least through most of the 1930s, De Caux’s retrospective summary of Lovestone’s ‘American exceptionalism’ does not represent the actual outlook of the Lovestone group. Material by Lovestone and Wolfe presented in this volume – skillfully employing quotations from Marx, Engels, and Lenin – demonstrate that their version of ‘exceptionalism’ represents an insistence on a critical-minded, historically-specific application of Marxist theory that is consistent with the method employed by some of its key representatives. It was inconsistent with the dogmatic and authoritarian approach upon which Stalin and so many of his followers insisted.

On the other hand, at the end of the 1930s and into 1940, well after the group’s break with Communism as such, there are elements of thought consistent with Wikipedia’s description of the concept. This is particularly the case in the writings reproduced here by Will Herberg (the capable editor of the group’s newspaper, *Workers Age*), and Lewis Corey (an influential supporter, whose *The Decline of American Capitalism* and *The Crisis of the Middle Class* are still considered classic works of US Marxism). It is also evident in the dissolution statement of the Independent Labor League of America. Even this version of ‘exceptionalism’ involved the US showing the way forward to the rest of the world – beyond old ‘dogmas’ of the European left – for a new perspective for achieving a genuinely democratic socialism.

In later years, however, Wolfe himself would give the theory a spin that harmonised with a more conservative interpretation:

17 De Caux 1970, pp. 151–3.

Lovestone differed with Stalin on the entire trend of American economics and politics. The position of Stalin [in 1928–34] was that the American economic system was in its final crisis and the revolution in America was just around the corner. We might have liked to believe that the prolonged crisis which we had predicted was the beginning of the progressive acceleration of our country's toboggan slide from which there would be no recovery, but as the depression deepened, Lovestone had the impudence to write that the American economy was still the strongest in the world and still growing stronger in its relative position among the advanced countries then in crisis, that the ascendancy of the United States in the world was still continuing, as indeed our marvelous retooling when World War II came and such exploits as the Marshall Plan were to prove. Even today [the 1960s], Germany, France, and England are quite ready to recognize that the United States is Number One, despite all our vicissitudes and self-criticism.¹⁸

Trade-Union Contributions

Among members of the Lovestone group were outstanding figures in the US labour movement. One of their best-known efforts was in one of the most militant and dynamic unions of the rising Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), embracing workers of the auto industry. A more impressive and durable engagement was in and through the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), which had been one of the most left-wing affiliates of the old AFL, and contributed substantially to initiating the CIO, before swinging back to the AFL.

According to Bertram Wolfe, throughout the 1930s, 'whenever we won ground in some industry, the [Communist] party would plant its own colonizers there to dislodge us. Thus we were among the pioneers in the auto industry in Detroit, and one of our members even won the presidency in the nascent union, but then the official party rushed in [with] such numbers that they dislodged us'. Apparently referring to the ill-fated presidency of Homer Martin in the United Automobile Workers (UAW), Wolfe's account is seriously inaccurate on several counts. Although it is questionable that Martin was actually a member of the Lovestone group, it is a well-documented fact that Lovestone and a number of his comrades were deeply involved as advisors, and paid UAW staff in efforts to buttress Martin's leadership. Reliable accounts, however, indicate

¹⁸ Wolfe 1981, p. 566.

that Martin himself was a problematical figure, and that 'Lovestone saw himself as an expert par excellence on fighting Communists', as Bert Cochran put it, with 'his natural inclinations to rely on ruthless power plays' nourished by his past factional experience. In opposition to Martin were a number of UAW members, some of them among the founders of the union, some of whom were indeed Communists, but others being Socialists and Trotskyists and independent radicals, among others.¹⁹

Martin and his closest supporters were, indeed, dislodged by 1938. This bitter and disappointing experience for the Lovestone group – certainly combined with other factors, both international and domestic – contributed substantially to a dramatic deepening of Lovestoneite hostility toward the Communist Party as a force in the labour movement, and also to a shift in their attitude toward the CIO, which became increasingly tempered by a desire to maintain ties with the stridently anti-Communist AFL.

What is clear from material presented here, however, is that Lovestoneites too – before the eruption of factional war in the UAW – were intimately involved in some of the early heroic battles that built the union: the Flint sit-down strike, the 'Battle of Bulls' Run', the efforts of the Women's Emergency Brigade. As such, they were in a position to provide vivid accounts from participants in some central developments of the class struggle and the CIO upsurge of the 1930s.

Charles S. Zimmerman – popularly known as 'Sasha' – was unquestionably the most important trade-union figure in the ranks of the Lovestone group in all of its incarnations. Part of the massive wave of Eastern European Jews who flooded into the United States in the early 1900s, he was – as were many of them – immersed in a left-wing sub-culture in which various socialist, anarchist, and radical-labour currents swirled, interacted, and helped give rise to a powerful surge, particularly in the garment trades. When he and many others joyously hailed the Russian Revolution, he was already an experienced union activist. As the Communist Party which he helped to found and lead grew and began to mature, Zimmerman – as a popular personality, capable organiser and impressive tactician – became a nationally recognised leader of the Communist-influenced left-wing faction that battled for leadership of the ILGWU.²⁰

19 Wolfe 1981, p. 561; Cochran 1977, pp. 133–4. Also see Alexander 1981, pp. 56–9, Bernstein 1971, pp. 554–69, and Dollinger and Dollinger 2000, pp. 31–51.

20 See Howe 1976, pp. 309, 331–8, 340, 346–7, and also see Dubinsky and Raskin 1977, which includes substantial interviews with Zimmerman, and Guide to the International Ladies

Mistakes and possible overreach in the mid-to-late 1920s helped mobilise the moderate Socialists, anarchists, and traditional bureaucracy within the ILGWU to counterattack and drive many of the left-wing insurgents out of the union. This dovetailed with Stalin-influenced shifts in the world-Communist movement that caused the left-wing network they had built within the AFL, the Trade Union Educational League, to transform into an increasingly ultra-left Trade Union Unity League. This new incarnation of US Communist trade unionism called for a break from all AFL unions and the creation of separate revolutionary industrial unions – in the garment industry, the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union (NTWIU), of which Zimmerman became Vice-President.

According to Bertram Wolfe, Zimmerman had not been aligned with Lovestone in the faction-fights within the Communist Party, but joined the Lovestone group ‘on moral grounds’ in reaction against the Stalin-orchestrated expulsions. Whatever the motivation, he ‘brought with him a number of needle trades workers who had fought the hired gangsters of the employers on picket lines and were now able to act as our bodyguards when the official party tried to break up our open meetings by physical force’.²¹ Already questioning the ultra-left ‘dual-union’ orientation imposed by the Stalin-dominated Comintern, Zimmerman was ejected from the NTWIU and returned to the garment shops as a rank-and-file worker. There he played a central and dynamic role in helping to build up Dressmakers Local 22 as a powerful force within the ILGWU, and in 1933 was elected to lead it, in 1934 winning a vice presidency in the ILGWU. This meant working closely with its moderate-Socialist President David Dubinsky as the union became an increasingly vocal and militant voice for industrial unionism, joining with others to form the CIO. Through Zimmerman’s auspices, Will Herberg became education director for Local 22, and Jay Lovestone was able to address the national convention of the ILGWU as an honoured guest and to enhance his own influence in labour circles by maintaining an increasingly close relationship with Dubinsky. Robert J. Alexander notes that Zimmerman was not in a position to be involved ‘in the

Garment Workers Union: Charles S. Zimmerman Papers, Cornell University Library (<http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/EAD/htmldocs/KCLO5780-014.html>).

21 Wolfe 1981, pp. 560–1. Robert J. Alexander suggests that Zimmerman was indeed in the Lovestone caucus (Alexander 1981, p. 22), but James P. Cannon recalls that in fact he was aligned with one of Lovestone’s opponents, Ludwig Lore (Cannon 1962, p. 130); Lore had been expelled earlier for indiscipline and for suspected ‘Trotskyist’ sympathies.

day-to-day activities of the Communist Opposition, as were Lovestone, Wolfe and Herberg', but that he 'nevertheless constituted part of the inner circle'.²²

One of the unsung heroes of the 1920s and early 1930s was Ellen Dawson, author of an insightful and compelling 1929 report, presented here, on the legendary Gastonia strike. A young Scottish immigrant, she grew up and was shaped amid the labour militancy of 'Red Clydeside' near Glasgow, and then the industrial centre of Manchester in the North of England, before coming to the United States in 1921, at the age of twenty. Already immersed in labour radicalism as a teenage textile worker, when labouring in a textile factory in Passaic, New Jersey she was swept up in the militant 1926 strike organised by the Communist-led National Textile Workers Union (NTWU), which was headed by Albert Weisbord.

A capable strike leader, she was described by a friend from this period as 'a small, wiry, somewhat elfish young woman in her middle twenties, with shining black cropped hair, twinkling little brown eyes, and a Scotch accent'. She became prominent in the union, and soon found her way into the Communist Party as well. A full-time organiser in two other major strikes – in New Bedford, Massachusetts (1928), and in the Loray Mill strike in Gastonia, North Carolina (1929) – this energetic activist rose to the position of Vice President of the national union and became a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party.²³

Opposed to what she considered to be sectarian and destructive union policies that Stalin and his co-thinkers were imposing in the world-Communist movement and in the unions, Dawson was firmly aligned with Lovestone in 1929, and quickly found herself expelled from the Communist Party and from her union as well. She became a member of the national council that presumably led the new Communist Party USA (Majority Group). After a few years, however, she seems to have drifted out of left-wing activity altogether, remaining a lifelong textile worker, finding a husband, having children, and blending into 'normal' working-class life.²⁴ This loss to the Lovestone group, which appears not to have created much of a stir among the comrades, may be related to the fact that the group's internal culture was largely male-oriented –

²² Alexander 1981, pp. 36, 45–8.

²³ Alexander 1981, pp. 28, 35; Weisbord 1977, p. 173; Foner 1980, pp. 207, 222, 224, 231–2; McMullen 2005.

²⁴ Dawson 1930, p. 8, tells a bitter story of ultra-left sectarianism, and her own undemocratic exclusion from the National Textile Workers Union – illustrating how 'an organization with greatest possibilities for growth can be crippled and paralyzed by false policies and destructive methods'. Also see McMullen 2010.

certainly in terms of leadership, authors and topics appearing in Lovestoneite publications etc.

While gender limitations may have weakened the Lovestone group in its various incarnations, however, the same was certainly not the case in regard to race.

Anti-Racist Pioneers

Some of the least appreciated contributions of the Lovestone group have to do with struggles against racism and with contributions made to the thinking and activism of anti-racist activists, particularly in the labour movement and in the later civil rights movement.

In contrast to the failure to deal with issues of gender and women's rights, major documents, publications, and articles dealt with issues related to race and racism. 'Marxism and the "Negro Question"', a substantial analysis, was published by the Communist Party Opposition in 1935, but major sections of Lovestone's key pamphlet, *The American Labor Movement: Its Past, Present, and Future* (portions of which are reproduced here), also gave serious attention to overcoming racial differences among workers and combating racism. Will Herberg and Bertram Wolfe focused serious attention on such issues. Articles by such labour activists as Ellen Dawson and Charles Zimmerman also addressed questions of racism, as did those by a number of black writers, such as Edward Welsh, Grace Lamb, and Ernest Calloway.

In his autobiography, Wolfe wrote with obvious pride: 'In the thirties I founded the magazine *Race*, for which many distinguished Negro intellectuals, men like Ralph Bunche and other Negro leaders, wrote'. The projected quarterly was able only to publish two issues in 1935–6, but in them readers were offered articles not only by Bunche (a substantial and positive account of the National Negro Congress) and Wolfe (an article on 'Marxism and the Negro', drawing from the CPO document), but also, among others, E. Franklin Frazier, Alain Locke, Henry Lee Moon, Lester Granger, George Streater, and Langston Hughes. Some of these were among the journal's board of directors and editorial board, along with: African-American Socialist Frank Crosswaith; long-time socialist-pacifist, feminist, and white stalwart of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Martha Gruening; Abram Harris and Sterling Spero (authors of the classic 1931 study *The Black Worker*); social worker and union organiser Ernest Rice McKinney, who was about to become a leading Trotskyist; and the militant activist intellectual and radical attorney

Loren Miller.²⁵ The editors outlined their aims in a manner that blended openness with a frank radicalism:

The editors of *Race*, holding differing views on many things, are in accord on the following:

- I. There is need of scientific analysis of and intelligent action against the widespread pseudo-anthropology that serves as an apologetic for imperialism, fascism and racial discrimination.
- II. There is no solution of the race problem short of an uncompromising struggle for the economic, political, and social equality of Negroes and whites and the end of legal and social discrimination based on 'race', 'color', 'national origin', or 'blood'.
- III. Discrimination against the Negro in America is so deeply rooted in the very foundations of the social order that there is no 'solution' to this basic problem of American life short of a fundamental reconstruction of our social order.
- IV. While the struggle for race equality (like charity) must begin at home, we cannot remain indifferent to the questions of Ethiopia and Africa, the Japanese aggression in China, anti-semitism in Germany and related problems throughout the world. And while in America the 'Negro question' overshadows all other racial questions, *Race* must take cognizance of such signs of the times as the treatment of Japanese, Chinese and Hindus in California; and the presence in the United States of an increasing anti-semitism and dangerous fascist tendencies and doctrines.
- V. The editors invite the cooperation of all men and women who are in agreement with these aims.²⁶

The most prominent African-American in the Lovestone Group was Edward Welsh. He had been in Moscow in 1929, when the US Communist delegation was bullied by the Stalin leadership of the Communist International. At the conclusion of the final decisive session with the Comintern's American Commission, at 3:00 am, Stalin rose to leave, but made a point of pausing in front of the Lovestoneites and, as Bertram Wolfe remembered it, 'reached out his hand to our handsome Negro member of the delegation, Edward Welsh,

25 Wolfe 1981, p. 532.

26 'Our Aims', *Race*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer 1936, p. 64.

who stood between Lovestone and me'. Pulling his hand behind his back, Welsh said angrily: 'What the hell does this bastard single me out for?' As Wolfe recalled, Stalin flushed because, while not understanding English, 'he understood the tone and the gesture, and he resumed his march to his car'.²⁷ If he had done nothing else in his life, Welsh would have been remembered for that. Yet he remained a labour organiser for the rest of his life, and he impacted on the lives of those around him for years to come.

Maida Springer, a garment worker in Zimmerman's Local 22 of the ILGWU, and a young labour activist in the 1930s who hungrily sought knowledge at the Socialist Party's Rand School, the Lovestoneite New Workers School, and the more heterogeneous Harlem Labor Center, enthused over Welsh as a teacher:

Here was this bronze god. He taught at the Harlem Labor Center, which offered history, philosophy, and that wonderful word, dialectical materialism, an understanding about Communist theory. He taught some of those classes that provided an understanding of the workers' cause and the workers' right to be a part of the structure of society with dignity. By intellect and by concept he was, in my view, a first-class brain. He was a terrific teacher, an excellent teacher. He could make a dull subject alive, that's the mark of a good teacher. He can take a dry history of the labor movement and pace up and down and talk to you about it and make it alive! Eddie Welsh was a Lovestoneite. I didn't know this when I was sitting there in awe as he was moving back and forth across the room with his six foot four self, this bronze Adonis.²⁸

In the late 1930s, Welsh also influenced a Communist Party activist, and future 'movement lawyer', Conrad Lynn, who was already chaffing under the contradictions of his own organisation:

I particularly admired Eddie Welsh, a big, brown-skinned, hot-tempered man with a vitriolic tongue, which he used with the resonance of Paul Robeson. . . . One evening at a political meeting in Harlem of the American League Against War and Fascism, he noticed a picture of Stalin on the wall. Eddie strode down the center aisle, pushed aside the chairman of the evening, and ripped down Stalin's picture.

27 Wolfe 1981, p. 523.

28 Richards 2004, pp. 76–7.

He turned to the astonished audience and said, 'Black revolutionaries should not stand for homage to the bloody collaborator of Mussolini in Ethiopia and the French in Algeria'.

I was surprised to find myself standing and cheering. Party members gaped, and the Socialists looked at me in bewilderment. It was obvious to everyone that my position in the Communist party was becoming untenable. My loyalty to the colored people of the world was far greater than my loyalty to a political party.²⁹

There were others who went on to make a difference. One of these was Ernest Calloway, who became a radical union organiser, a role he maintained after leaving the Lovestoneites in 1939, and who also became a writer, a prominent civil-rights leader after moving to St. Louis, Missouri, combining labour and civil rights activism with teaching courses at St. Louis University. A life-long socialist, he always emphasised the link between the struggles for racial and economic justice.³⁰

Pauli Murray was another Lovestoneite who went on to make history: dimensions of her fruitful life encompassed the roles of black activist, feminist, lawyer, Episcopal priest and poet. She emphasised in her memoirs that, confused by the diverse currents of militant radicalism swirling around her in the 1930s, 'I discovered that the most intelligent opposition to the Communist party came from a small group of former Communists who had been expelled from the party in the late 1920s because of differences over strategy and tactics to be applied in the United States'. She continued:

Members of this opposition group were known as Lovestoneites and were based largely in New York City. . . . The group's expulsion from the Third International grew out of their theory of 'American exceptionalism' – that is, the belief that capitalism did not follow the same pattern of development in every country, that a party line fashioned by the Soviet Communists could not be transformed mechanically to every country in which the Communists were active, and that American Communists, for

29 Lynn 1979, p. 67.

30 Thomas 2004, pp. 136–8; Cawthra 2000–1; Ernest Calloway Manuscript Collection, 1961–91, Saint Louis University Libraries Special Collections: Archives and Manuscripts (<http://archon.slu.edu/?p=collections/findingaid&id=7&q=&rootcontentid=593>); Interview with Ernest Calloway, by Richard Resh, Black Community Leaders Project, July 31, 1970, State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center, St. Louis University of Missouri (<http://www.umsi.edu/~whmc/guides/to21.htm>).

example, should be free to develop strategies most suitable to the peculiar conditions of the United States. Although the Lovestoneites continued to think of themselves as revolutionary socialists, the logic of their position drove them further and further away from official communism, and they became some of the party's most brilliant critics. I took some courses at their New Workers School, and from men like Ben Davidson, a former teacher who later became executive director of the Liberal Party of New York, Bertram Wolfe, Will Herberg, and Lovestone himself.³¹

In fact, Murray and her friend Ella Baker did more than take classes and absorb ideas. Radical activists that they were, they became members of the Lovestone group for at least two or three years.³² Baker, a longtime staff member for the NAACP, would play a central role in building support for the Montgomery bus boycott that catapulted Martin Luther King to national prominence. She went on to work closely with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and then became an advisor to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Especially as a mentor to young organisers and grassroots activists, she conceptually linked civil-rights struggles with a vision of radical social change that would move in a socialist direction, and she emphasised the centrality of meaningful democracy and mass participation in this process. The theme of democracy being at the heart of socialism had become inseparable from the turn that at least some of the Lovestoneites' Marxism took in the late 1930s.

Marxism, Problems and Decline

We have noted some areas in which the Lovestone group sought to make contributions to Marxist analysis. Certainly, Lovestone's discussion of the consciousness and struggles of the American working class being impacted upon in specific ways by the peculiarities of US social and economic development stood as a creative contribution to an important question, and Wolfe's explorations of Marx and America were further enhanced through his collaboration with the Trotskyist-influenced Mexican artist Diego Rivera, who created a remarkable mural history of the United States for the New Workers School, reproduced in a best-selling book with a Marxist text by Bertram D. Wolfe – *Portrait of America*.³³ While Wolfe later felt the analysis was relatively crude, it

31 Murray 1989, p. 103.

32 Gilmore 2008, pp. 253–4; Ransby 2003, pp. 72, 94–7.

33 Rivera 1934.

was far more sophisticated and comprehensive than any other effort by a US Marxist up to that point. Another contribution was offered by a 1932 cutting-edge analysis of abolitionism, the Civil War, and Reconstruction in the United States by Will Herberg, which anticipated later work by W.E.B. Du Bois and C.L.R. James.³⁴ Reference has already been made to other positive qualities – a certain openness and critical mindedness – of the Lovestone group's Marxism. Yet there are other sides to this question that must be considered if one is to make sense of the group's fate by the end of the 1930s.

One of the most striking deficiencies in the Marxism and politics of the Lovestone group, in retrospect, was the absence of any serious engagement with the so-called 'woman question'. An oppressive male predominance within society as a whole, including the working class, was nourished by, and helped to perpetuate, cultural patterns of patriarchy, female oppression, and second-class status. This found reflection in the organised labour movement, and even in the Socialist and Communist movements. There were countervailing tendencies, especially on the Left. In the German Social-Democratic Party, and then in the German Communist Party, there was the work represented by Clara Zetkin that pushed strongly in the direction of equal rights for, and full participation by women in larger society, in the class struggle, and in the labour movement. The Lovestoneites certainly knew of her work, and accorded her great respect, especially because she was resistant to Stalin's narrow, dogmatic, and sectarian 'stupidities' (and was sympathetic to Lovestone's resistance to Stalin's *diktats*) – indeed, glowing pages of admiration and gratitude toward her shine out in Ben Gitlow's generally sour and cynical memoir, *I Confess* (although – revealingly – there is no mention there of the immense socialist-feminist efforts that had been central to her political life).³⁵

Tucked in at the bottom of page 6 in the 7 April 1930 issue of their early publication, *Revolutionary Age*, there does appear (one month late) a very brief comment on International Women's Day by Zetkin, calling for 'equality before the law' and the transformation of the 'economic system, forms of life, the relations between human beings' to allow for 'equal social conditions for development and activity' to be assured to women and men. Asserting that this was being achieved in the Soviet Union, Zetkin argued that, in Depression-ridden capitalism, 'the rising flood of misery, legal protection for working women, social legislation for mother and child are continuously diminishing and becoming a hollow phrase'. She concluded: 'Louder, more resonant, stormier,

34 Some of the material referred to here can be found in this volume, but also see Rivera 1934), and Wolfe's later comments in Wolfe 1939, pp. 372–5, and Wolfe 1981, pp. 611–23.

35 Gitlow 1940, pp. 584–86. Also see Zetkin 1984.

more uncompromising than ever must the demands of the toiling women be flung into the teeth of the master class!' This modest item was accompanied by a lengthier tribute to Zetkin by Kate Gitlow (the formidable 'Mother Gitlow', with her son a prominent Communist Party member and now committed to the Lovestone group). 'Clara Zetkin has worked among the working women for decades under the most difficult conditions', she wrote. 'When the most advanced workers were prejudiced against this work, she insisted on organizing and educating the working women as workers to participate actively with the workers in all their struggles against the master class'. Adding that 'work among women has been placed on the program as an important factor in the Communist struggle against capitalism', Gitlow went on to bemoan Zetkin's marginalisation in the official-Communist movement, elaborating on the need for working women to join in the Lovestone group's demand for Communist unity. This might be considered far too little from the standpoint of women's rights and feminism, but even such limited items were neither prominent nor frequent features in the publications and culture of the Lovestoneites.³⁶

Indeed, such sexist myopia had characterised the US Communist Party under Lovestone's leadership. The vibrant and experienced Communist activist Ella Wolfe, an intimate friend, had written to him from Mexico in the early 1920s about some of the work she was engaged in. Lovestone responded with heavy reference to her husband:

To tell you the truth, I was not surprised that Bert was doing well in his new venture [of helping to build the Mexican Communist Party]. It's just like him to swallow up languages. Yet, I did not think you were so ravenously inclined in that direction. However, under Bert's inspiration you can do anything and everything very well. I am not kidding about it either.

36 Zetkin 1930 and Gitlow 1930. Colourful descriptions of 'Mother' Gitlow are to be found in Chambers 1952, pp. 203–5, 251. Chambers is best known as a talented Communist writer who became a key operative in the Communist underground connected with Soviet espionage-efforts, and who famously recanted, accusing Alger Hiss of passing government secrets to him. From his memoirs, it is clear that Chambers had Lovestoneite sympathies, one of his closest friends being Michael Intrator, a member of the Lovestone group throughout the 1930s. Chambers had insinuated himself into the confidence of the US Trotskyists as they were being victimised, while in the Communist Party, betrayed them to the Lovestone leadership – then was so deeply disturbed by the expulsion of the Lovestoneites that he took a leave of absence before returning to embark on a more professional undercover assignment. See Tanenhaus 1998, pp. 60–1, 66–7, 221.

She angrily responded: 'The world – even our radical world – seems to feel that when a woman marries she is completely lost – that whatever charm or ability she may have had before marriage either disappears or is attributed to her husband'. She added pointedly: 'Do you think I love books because Bert reads? Do you think my mastery of Spanish is due to Bert's acquisition of a large vocabulary of Spanish? As a matter of fact (unbelievable as it may sound to you), everybody here says I speak Spanish better than Bert does'. In 1928, she complained to him about the treatment of women in the Lovestone caucus:

They are looked upon and treated like fourth-class citizens, although I consider the native ability of most of them as at least on the same level as the native ability of some of the mediocre peacocks strutting around on 14th Street [location of the Communist Party headquarters]. I consider you completely responsible; for you are the one who sets the tone and the mode. The women of our group . . . are given no opportunity for growth and development. On the contrary, should they show some special aptitude, they are squashed.³⁷

Important contributions to Marxism and revolutionary politics, reflecting such sensibilities and talents as those of Clara Zetkin or Ella Wolfe (or Grace Lamb, or Ellen Dawson) seemed beyond the grasp of the Lovestone group (certainly its all-male 'inner circle'), to its own detriment.

The quality of Lovestoneite Marxist theory was also greatly diminished by certain other problems built into the very core of the group's existence as it emerged from the Communist Party. First of all, despite an inclination toward the critical mindedness that is essential to Marx's own method, there were initially very definite limits. The Lovestone group was counting – at least for its initial seven years of existence – on eventually being brought back into the mainstream of the world-Communist movement. Those leaders remaining in the US Communist Party were, in Lovestone's view, politically inept and 'damaged goods', and – as Wolfe has explained it – 'after those Stalin had driven out had demonstrated that they were better leaders, more successful in building up their parties and the Comintern, and better defenders of the Soviet Union, then Stalin would be glad to *take them back again* and a new *modus vivendi* could be arrived at within a more variegated and democratic Comintern'. It is instructive that ten full pages out of forty-nine in Wolfe's own pamphlet, *What Is the Communist Opposition?*, were devoted to an assault on the

37 Harlick 2002. Living from 1896 to 2001, Ella Wolfe lived, and remained active and alert, until the age of 103. Also see Tanehaus 2001.

revolutionary anti-Stalinism of Leon Trotsky, essentially repeating arguments Wolfe had advanced in his eighty-nine-page polemic, *The Trotsky Opposition: Its Significance for American Workers*, produced in 1928 as part of an international anti-Trotsky campaign, when Wolfe was still education director of the official Communist Party.³⁸

Some of Wolfe's comrades (and factional opponents) bitterly remembered him as being capable of intellectual dishonesty for the purpose of scoring factional points. 'Wolfe, better educated and probably more intelligent than Lovestone, but weaker, was Lovestone's first assistant and supporter in all his devious maneuvers', commented James P. Cannon, whom Wolfe helped to expel from the Communist Party on the charge of 'Trotskyism' in 1928 – with methods that would soon be employed against Wolfe himself and other Lovestoneites. 'He was different from Lovestone mainly in his less passionate concentration on the intrigues of the moment and less desperate concern about the outcome'. Nonetheless, his factional writing was 'crooked all the way through', mused Cannon to historian Theodore Draper a quarter of a century later. 'His 1929 [actually 1928] pamphlet against "Trotskyism" shows Wolfe for what he is worth'. According to Cannon, Wolfe and Lovestone 'were Stalinists before Stalin's own method was fully disclosed to the Americans [in the Communist movement]'.³⁹

While still head of the US Communist Party, Lovestone had focused on expelling real and imagined Trotskyist dissidents. More than this, in 1926, in Moscow on Comintern business, he participated in smashing the opposition that Gregory Zinoviev and others were beginning to mount against Stalin – exulting that the American delegation was on the winning side: 'I know everyone of our boys is solid with Stalin'. The Lovestoneites were close to the old Bolshevik Nikolai Bukharin, who supported their desire to chart a more moderate course for the United States. But when it became clear that their ally was about to lose definitively in his own opposition to Stalin (his erstwhile ally against Trotsky and Zinoviev), Lovestone introduced a resolution condemning his Russian friend. For Stalin, however, this was too little, too late.⁴⁰

38 Wolfe 1981, pp. 567–8. Also see Alexander 1981, pp. 117–21. On the anti-Trotskyism that was central to Lovestoneite identity, see Wolfe 1928 and Wolfe 1933, pp. 39–49. Numerous articles in *Revolutionary Age* and *Workers Age* repeated, expanded upon, and added to the pattern of hostility, denigration, and dismissal toward the ideas of Trotsky and his co-thinkers. Herberg referred to Trotsky as the 'Genius of Error' – see Ausmus 1987, p. 16.

39 Cannon 1962, pp. 156–7.

40 Morgan 1999, pp. 62, 72–3, 76–8, 81; Alexander 1981, 121–3. In some ways Lovestone had preferred Stalin to Bukharin. In May 1927, after a one-hour interview with Stalin, he wrote

Lovestone's initial opposition to Stalin was around policies to be pursued in the United States – he was not inclined to be critical of Stalin's policies in the USSR. In the early 1930s, Wolfe notes, Lovestone was adamant that the 'general line' Stalin was advancing for the rapid industrialisation and forced collectivisation of agriculture – his so-called 'revolution from above' – was worthy of enthusiastic support from the Communist Party Opposition: Jay Lovestone and Will Herberg, who became his chief assistant in this campaign, began inserting 'long and glowing articles in *Workers' Age* on the achievements of the General Line and the first Five-Year Plan'. Wolfe himself nursed quiet doubts, but Ben Gitlow (in touch with relatives in the Soviet Union actually experiencing this 'revolution from above') angrily dissented. In an ineffectual minority, the victim of a negative whispering campaign, a frustrated Gitlow resigned, complaining of 'the present unprincipledness and growth of factionalism' in the group.⁴¹

In his appeal to the plenum of the Communist Party Opposition on 11 February 1933, Gitlow had laid out a clear critique, insisting that 'the general line of the Stalin regime for the Soviet Union is basically wrong and is responsible for the grave critical situation of the proletarian revolution today'. The specifics of Stalin's line inside the Soviet Union, he argued, involved a break from the traditional-Leninist 'worker-peasant alliance' orientation: 1) 'an excessive tempo of collectivisation without providing the necessary mechanized base for the same'; 2) 'the use of coercion in forcing the peasants into the collectives'; 3) 'the failure to provide the necessary flow of commodities from the city in exchange for the products of agriculture'; 4) 'pumping out the resources

to his comrades that Stalin 'talks little and does much. The difference between Stalin and Bukharin is that Bukharin is more an abstract, philosophical polemicist, while Stalin is sharp and concise' (quoted in Morgan 1999, p. 68).

- 41 Wolfe 1981, pp. 568–71; Gitlow 1933, p. 9. Gitlow was particularly indignant in regard to the New Workers School, which he characterised as 'today the main activity of the group'. He complained that it 'is so directed as to attract mainly non-proletarian elements and elements completely divorced from the struggles of the workers'. Some of this hostility may have been related to his perception that 'the school has been utilized as the center of factional organization and for educational campaigns against decisions distasteful to the school clique', particularly 'against those comrades [presumably such as himself] who were for aggressive independent mass activity'. He concluded that 'the school has centered upon abstract academic consideration of subjects and has not tied up its curriculum with the actual needs and struggles of the labor and communist movement' (Gitlow 1933, p. 10). It is possible that this was co-authored with Lazar Becker, Gitlow's factional co-thinker. The very rare mimeographed pamphlet is available online: <http://archive.org/details/IsTheStalinGeneralLineCorrect>.

from the village'; 5) 'classing poor and middle peasants who did not accept collectivization as kulaks [rich peasants] and enemies of the Soviet Union'. Gitlow insisted such policies connected with 'the inner-party course of the Stalin regime' that had brought about 'the abrogation of inner-party democracy, through expulsions and drives against critical members of the Party', and also with 'the bankruptcy of the Stalin leadership' in the Communist International. More, he charged that the Communist Party Opposition's refusal to acknowledge this reality – instead 'printing exaggerated glowing reports in favor of the Stalin regime's course in the Soviet Union' – flowed from 'a theory of expectant speculation that the present policy of support of the Stalin regime will lead straight back to the ["official" Communist] Party', and in fact represented 'the degeneration of the group into an unprincipled sect trailing the Party'.⁴²

Consistent with this, in 1936 the Lovestone group accepted at face-value the confessions of treason by Old Bolsheviks Gregory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev and others, supporting the trial and guilty verdicts, and accepting the executions that followed. Interestingly, it is said that 'prior to a meeting on the subject Herberg told a group of younger Communists in a bar on Fourteenth Street [in New York City] that he opposed the executions', but once in attendance at the meeting he 'argued that by the year 2000 the executions would be remembered only as "a bump on the log of history"'. By 1937, however, the bloody purges engulfed and destroyed Bukharin and many other friends in Russia, and it was no longer possible to maintain such historical-relativist nonchalance.⁴³ Murderous repression was also being employed by Stalinists in the Spanish Civil War against the Lovestone group's co-thinkers, and the accumulation of other negative experiences with US Communists led to the final recognition that there would be absolutely no place for the Lovestone group in any world-Communist movement of the present or future.

The longstanding orientation of the Lovestone group, and its very understanding of Communism and of Marxism, were obviously no longer tenable. Its process of fundamental reorientation, beginning in 1937 and accelerating over the next three years, made it impossible for this dwindling group of comrades to endure as an organised entity.

Examining Lovestone's 1938 essay, 'Marxism and the Unions', followed up by Will Herberg's preparatory article of the 1938 convention that culminated in the group's final name being 'Independent Labor League of America' (both available in this collection), one sees an emphasis on certain longstanding

42 Gitlow 1933, pp. 3, 9, 11, 12.

43 Ausmus 1987, p. 213; Alexander 1981, pp. 123–30.

themes of the group, but they are given a new twist. The commitment to the working class became a commitment to the existing trade unions as the avenue for working-class activism – which involved only a fraction of the actual working class that happened to be organised in unions. This was accompanied by a growing tendency to ignore non-union struggles and movements that the unions were not involved in (including activity for women's rights, anti-racist struggles, etc.) An opposition to Stalinism became a generalised anti-Communism that provided a rationale for driving all Communist Party members and sympathisers out of the labour movement, and turning away from the CIO as a labour federation that was 'soft' on Communism. A commitment to respect and build the existing labour movement (purged of Communist influence), and not imposing one's own organisational or 'sectarian' concerns, became a recipe for accepting and honouring the unions' existing leadership and policies – certainly Dubinsky of the ILGWU, but also the new secretary treasurer of the American Federation of Labor, a decidedly non-radical plumber named George Meany, whose speeches the *Workers' Age* began to publish. The functioning of an independent socialist organisation whose actual activity would be indistinguishable from the existing AFL leadership, raised a question as to what the group's purpose would be.

In 1940, the re-examination of Marxism raised additional questions. A close friend of the ILLA, Lewis Corey (whose original name, which he used in earlier years, was Louis Fraina), had been a central figure in the founding of American Communism. While drifting away from the mainstream of the Communist movement, he had become a leading Marxist theorist in the United States, with positions similar to those of the Lovestone group (of which he may have been, at least for a short while, a secret member). Now, however, he advanced a thoughtful critique of old-time strategies and tactics, as well as new thinking about the nature and possible structure of the socialist future. But all of this was couched in a generalised rejection of Marxist perspectives.⁴⁴ In response, Will Herberg, while defending much of the Marxist tradition, utilised an approach only a step away from the ethical-religious perspective that he would fully embrace as a Jewish theologian a decade later. More, he distinguished the fundamental approach of Lenin as veering away from the democratic perspectives of Marx, raising questions about the nature of Herberg's own 'Leninism' over the previous two decades. Now, instead of distinguishing Lenin from Trotsky, Herberg tended to lump them together in a negative bundle. Wolfe, on

44 Corey deserves much more scholarly attention than has been afforded him, the only major study as of 2012 being Buhle 1995.

the other hand, eloquently sought to vindicate ‘the basic core of Marxism’ – yet even here, there seemed a new note of uncertainty (for example, in suggesting that the forecast of a socialist future was ‘vague and tentative’).

Then there was the ILLA’s shift on US involvement in the approaching Second World War. The evolving new orientation aligned the group closely to US foreign policy and set the stage for a direction entirely different from the Lovestone group’s old revolutionary-socialist perspectives, increasingly seen by most leading comrades as irrelevant to unfolding global realities. In this, it is worth considering a description of Bertram and Ella Wolfe in the summer of 1940, as the debate in the ILLA was shaping up. A young writer and literary critic, Alfred Kazin, years later reminisced about a getaway vacation in a Provincetown writers’ and artists’ colony that he and his wife took.

Our closest friends in Provincetown were a middle-aged radical couple, childless, austere, extraordinarily sweet, among the survivors of the original idealistic core of the American Communist movement, who had lived in Russia, Spain, Mexico, and had now settled into a small radical sect, really a company of friends, wistfully seeking to stave off American entry into the war... With the little Mexican rugs and pots that they carried with them, the battered suitcases that contained their manuscripts and their favorite books, they looked like the traditionally ‘pure’ couple of radical theory joined by devotion to a common ideal... Bert Wolfe and his wife, ... who had come to value their revolutionary integrity over their very chances of survival, had finally acquired the innocent self-approval which in threadbare clergymen and their wives insulates them against a skeptical world.⁴⁵

And yet, there was an agony in what Kazin observed. ‘Bert Wolfe had already spent more than ten years eating his heart out at the Communists’ betrayal of his movement, and he now went to meals with a medicine bottle containing gastric juice’. Kazin recalled Wolfe’s ‘long, lean, bony body in blue trunks, as he sat cross-legged on the beach... a volume of Marx-Engels correspondence in German before him, looking intellectually, saintly and nervous, like a harried American version of Mahatma Gandhi’. He remembered ‘looking at Bert Wolfe’s long thin scholarly frame always ready to leap into discussion, the Bert whom I saw every day with his medicine bottle, his newspaper clippings, his Marxist texts, sitting before his typewriter in his hot little room just under the roof, tapping out fresh polemics... to nail down some disputed point about

45 Kazin 1965, pp. 151–4.

Soviet history that would better bolster his “scientifically” related argument about America’s need to stay out of war...⁴⁶

In conflict with Lovestone, Herberg and others, in a shrinking group that had lost confidence in itself, Wolfe found it impossible to sustain his efforts. In the midst of the debate that autumn – described in a letter from ILLA oppositionists aligned with Wolfe’s more ‘orthodox’ positions – he simply resigned from the ILLA, which was itself preparing to go out of existence. And it did so, at the close of 1940.

Introducing Lovestone to George Meany in the following year, Dave Dubinsky assured his fellow labour official: ‘The son of a bitch is okay, he’s been converted’. And now the former Communist chieftain began a new career as the labour movement’s anti-Communist chieftain. He never fully abandoned his former beliefs, but he certainly gave them a new twist. Pressured to denounce Marxism as such by right-wing politicians during the anti-Communist witch hunts of the 1950s, he responded privately to a friend: ‘These formulas have lost their meaning’, elaborating:

Marx analyzed eighteenth and nineteenth century capitalism brilliantly, but he didn’t know a thing about the United States. And don’t forget that Marx made the most powerful criticism of Russia. He warned against Russian reaction sweeping the world.⁴⁷

His primary focus, of course, was helping the US government win the Cold-War struggle against the Soviet Union and aligning organised labour in the ‘free world’ around the same goal. He and his assistant Irving Brown (a seasoned Lovestonite from the 1930s) forged intimate ties with the Central Intelligence Agency, advancing the agenda, politically and economically, of the United States as a global power.

Certainly by the end of the 1950s, Bertram Wolfe’s commitment to Marxist theory and a socialist future had totally shattered. Giving up on a working class that had demonstrated insufficient interest in its ‘historic mission’, concluding that the Soviet Union was the worst threat to human freedom and that the United States was the best bulwark against it, he became a dedicated functionary in the US State Department. He now spent immense intellectual energy

46 Ibid.

47 Quotations from Morgan 1999, pp. 141, 240. On the CIA ties of Lovestone and his close collaborators, and efforts to push US foreign-policy goals, see: Morgan 1999, pp. 156–325; Rathbun 1996, pp. 100–23; Sidney Lens, ‘Labor Lieutenants in the Cold War’, in Hall (ed.) pp. 310–23.

critiquing and denouncing what he had once believed in, also finding that he felt especially comfortable in well-to-do conservative circles that he would have shunned in earlier years.⁴⁸

Will Herberg – initially seeking an ethically-based and even religious variant of socialism – finally embraced an utterly different ideology, also moving much further to the right than his one-time leader, becoming one of the editors of the right-wing journal, *National Review*. Lovestone concluded that Herberg ‘was like a knife – all blade, very sharp, very keen, but you can’t use him, you can’t get a handle on him’. While having positive things to say about Marx even in his conservative old age, Herberg became such a stalwart defender of the old order that he denounced the civil-rights movement of Martin Luther King, Jr.: ‘King and his associates have been deliberately undermining the foundations of internal order in our country. With their rabble-rousing demagoguery, they have been cracking the “cake of custom” that holds us together’.⁴⁹

This was not the perspective of Sasha Zimmerman, who still adhered to socialist ideals, now headed up the civil-rights committee of the AFL-CIO, and helped to mobilise members of the ILGWU for the 1963 ‘March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom’, where King gave his ‘I Have a Dream’ speech. Nor were Herberg’s conservative attacks consistent with the perspectives of other former Lovestoneites, who maintained the kind of commitment to social change that he himself could no longer sustain, and who were centrally involved in civil-rights struggles, such as Ella Baker, Pauli Murray, and Ernest Calloway.

All of the Lovestoneites have passed away. Some died as revolutionaries before they died as people. Others stood fast in support of old ideals, until they could stand no longer. There is something to learn from the fallen, particularly since many of the problems they wrestled with remain with us today – their insights and experiences and accomplishments, as well as their disappointments and defeats, are worth considering as we face the present and ponder the future.

48 See Wolfe 1967 and Robert Hessen’s collection of Wolfe’s writings cited in n. 2 above. Wolfe is discussed in Le Blanc 2006, particularly pp. 111–13, and also in Le Blanc 1996, pp. 102–16.

49 Ausmus 1987, pp. 199, 212, 216; Le Blanc 2006, p. 289 n. 2.

PART 2

The Split and its Origins



The Organisational Roots of Jay Lovestone's Communist Party Opposition

Tim Davenport

The expulsion of Jay Lovestone, Benjamin Gitlow, Bertram D. Wolfe and about two hundred of their co-thinkers from the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) in the second half of 1929 was not a freak lightning bolt from blue skies, a political 'hit' placed on ideological opponents by an all-knowing, all-powerful, and intolerant Joseph Stalin. Rather, these expulsions and the establishment of an independent organisation, the Communist Party Opposition, marked the final scene of a ten-year drama, a decade of constant and dysfunctional factionalism which divided and decimated the American Communist movement.¹ The ousting of Lovestone, Gitlow and their co-thinkers was less an effort to install a more malleable and politically reliable Communist Party leadership in the United States than it was the end result of a draconian effort by Moscow to calm tumultuous factional seas.

Organisational division and internal competition and hostility had been present in the American Communist movement from the moment of its formation. Inspired by the triumph of the Russian Revolution and a belief in the efficacy of revolutionary struggle for the winning of state power, an organised movement emerged in the ranks of the Socialist Party of America (SPA) as World War I came to a close. While the anti-militarist SPA maintained its numerical strength in major urban centres and among the dozens of immigrant nationalities that comprised the American working class during the war, dissatisfaction began to grow among the Party's rank-and-file over the

1 It is difficult to succinctly and accurately describe the 1929 Communist Party Opposition. No fewer than four official names were used by the group during its 11-year life, including Communist Party of the USA (Majority Group) (1929), Communist Party USA (Opposition) (1932), Independent Communist Labor League (1937), and Independent Labor League of America (1938). The frequently-used term 'Right Opposition' was initially a pejorative attempt to connect the American dissidents with pro-New Economic Policy forces in the USSR at the time of the forced collectivisation of agriculture – a charge with only limited applicability. The phrase today connotes a certain programmatic conservatism which did not exist. The moniker 'Lovestoneites' reduces an entire political movement to the name of a single leader – at best a gross oversimplification.

organisation's obsession with the electoral pursuit of seats on city councils and state legislatures rather than the winning of state power. Common acceptance of a revolutionary-socialist prescription did not imply unity of action, however. Tactical differences immediately emerged among this eclectic company of revolutionary enthusiasts. Should the revolutionary movement concentrate upon splitting from or capturing the SPA, with its one hundred and ten thousand members and its assets? The latter course was initially followed by all, but the apparent victory obtained in the SPA elections of January 1919 proved Pyrrhic when its results were abrogated by the party regulars charged with tallying the result. By July the regulars would suspend or expel over half of the party membership in maintaining their organisational control, and disagreement about how exactly to proceed would split the Left-Wing Movement.

Not one but two US communist parties would emerge from the summer heat of Chicago, each regarding the other with jealousy and antipathy. There followed a bewildering series of splits and mergers: the expulsion of Detroit-based 'impossibilists' in January 1920 ended in the formation of yet another communist organisation, the Proletarian Party of America (PPA); a further April 1920 split of one organisation (Communist Party of America) ended with one faction joining with the other party (Communist Labor Party) to form a new group entirely (United Communist Party). Protracted and bitter merger negotiations, demanded by the Communist International, resulted in another unification in May 1921 to form a brand new 'Communist Party of America'. This was followed, four months later, with the angry divorce of the shotgun-wedding participants. Both the regular Party and the dissident split group used the same party name. Both, at the Comintern's behest, dutifully established parallel 'legal' parties ostensibly controlled by their underground organisations – the Workers Party of America and United Toilers of America, respectively. Together with the Proletarian Party this brought the total number of American communist organisations to five.

By the time the American Communist cats were herded back together again by the Communist International in the summer of 1922, fewer than twenty percent of the roughly thirty thousand pioneer participants of the American Communist movement remained.²

It was enough to drive a Comintern functionary mad.

2 The best extant membership series for the Socialist Party and the various Communist organisations, generated from primary documents, may be found on my Early American Marxism website: www.marxisthistory.org/.

Three Who Made a Revolutionary Party

Three founding members of the Communist movement in the United States would become key leaders of the Communist Party Opposition – Jay Lovestone, Bertram D. Wolfe and Benjamin Gitlow.

Jay Lovestone was born Jakob Liebshtein in the tiny *shtetl* of Molchad, located in Grodno province of Lithuania, on 15 December 1897.³ Today part of Belarus, the village was at the time part of the vast Russian empire to which ethnic Jews were consigned by the ultra-nationalist Romanov dynasty. The Yiddish-speaking Jewish people were regarded as an alien race and a wellspring of ethical depravity by the conservative Christian Slavs who peopled the Tsar's empire and they suffered not only the official economic and social discrimination of the state but also the periodic physical violence of the *pogrom* – outbursts of localised terror during which reactionary mobs destroyed property and beat and killed members of the perceived ethnic enemy within. With their travel and educational opportunities and land ownership legally restricted, a significant segment of Russia's Jewish population turned to the idea of socialist revolution as the answer to the chauvinism of the Tsarist state. Others turned inward, to perseverance against official hostility in cloistered communities, based on the traditional values of family and religion.

The Liebshtein family was unquestionably of the latter persuasion, orthodox adherents of the Judaic religion. Piety and religious observance did not lessen in the least the appeal of the siren song of America, however, to which hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews had yielded from the 1880s. In 1906, the head of the family, Barnett Liebshtein, rabbi of Molchad, travelled to America with his oldest daughter to set down roots. There he had earned enough money as a synagogue sexton and freelance teacher of Hebrew to bring over his wife, Emma, and their four remaining children late in the summer of the following year. Jacob was the youngest of the five children – not quite ten years old at the time of his arrival in the new world.

While they embraced the Jewish enclave of New York City, the Liebshteins did not settle down in the bustling ghetto of the Lower East Side, but rather found a home in The Bronx. Jacob and his brother were sent to school, their three sisters were relegated to work in the needle trades at an early age to support the family. Jacob was Americanised rapidly by the school system, making friends and playing sports with his peers. Radicalisation also came early thanks

3 The best biographical portrait of Lovestone, albeit skewed towards his later years, is Morgan 1999. The short account of Lovestone's earliest years presented here follows this work, pp. 3–14.

to his oldest sister, a member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, who took her little brother to a Socialist Sunday school on the sly. Young Jacob began to read the newspapers and magazines of the thriving New York radical movement and became a committed adherent to socialist ideas while still in his teenage years.

Liebstein – soon changing his name to Jay Lovestone – entered the College of the City of New York in the autumn of 1915, where he was further radicalised by the millions of peasants and workers left dead on the battlefields of Europe. Lovestone became active in the Intercollegiate Socialist Society at City College, a non-party youth organisation with close organisational ties to the SPA. Following graduation, Lovestone became an active participant in the Left-Wing Movement in New York City. In the summer of 1919 he became a founding member of the Communist Party of America. Lovestone gravitated towards the CPA Executive Secretary, C.E. Ruthenberg, and was elected to the governing Central Executive Committee of the new organisation. Throughout the subsequent series of splits and mergers, Lovestone marched in lockstep with his mentor Ruthenberg, continuously holding a place in top party councils. The 24-year-old Lovestone was himself promoted to the post of Executive Secretary of the underground CPA in February 1922 when, with Ruthenberg in jail, the position vacated when the previous 24-year-old officeholder resigned due to illness. Lovestone would remain at the helm of the underground CPA until the ill-fated Bridgman, Michigan convention of August 1922, which was raided by the police.

Bertram David Wolfe was a Jewish kid born in Brooklyn, about two years older than Lovestone.⁴ As was the case with Lovestone, Bert Wolfe was not a product of the New York City Lower East Side ghetto, his family having achieved a sort of local notoriety as the first ethnic Jews on their block. Wolfe's father was only a nominal adherent to Judaism, knowing only enough Hebrew to read a few traditional festival prayers, and had been born in Eastern Germany before working his way to America as a deck hand aboard a German ship. His mother, more religious, was the daughter of *émigré* German-Jewish Republican 'Red '48ers' and was born in Kingston, New York.

Bert Wolfe worked as a newsboy as a youth, bringing Brooklyn's four daily newspapers to an eager readership. His upbringing was far from scholarly, with the handful of books in the home including notably a small prayer book in Hebrew and English, of which Wolfe could only read the latter. Shy and studious, Wolfe developed an affinity for the written word in the public schools and libraries of the city. A gifted student, Wolfe finished the eight-year course of

4 This account of Bertram D. Wolfe's early life is extracted from his memoir, Wolfe 1981, *passim*.

elementary school in seven and shaved off another half year from the four-year high-school programme. Like Lovestone, Wolfe entered City College, finishing his work there in 1916. He would immediately put his college degree to use as a teacher of high-school English, not yet 20 years old.

In a memoir written decades after the fact, Wolfe recalled the imperialist World War as the cause of his radicalisation. Wolfe claims to have joined the Socialist Party despite not having yet been a 'convinced socialist', owing to its place as the most firm and consistent centre of opposition to the war. The young teacher spoke on behalf of the 1917 campaign of Socialist Party leader Morris Hillquit for Mayor of New York and himself won election to the Central Committees of Kings County and Greater New York. Wolfe became active in the Left-Wing Movement early in 1919 and was the primary author of the second organisational manifesto of the Left-Wing Section – a role which placed him in legal jeopardy under New York's 'criminal-anarchism law' during the repression which followed. When the great split came in September 1919, Wolfe would join Lovestone as a founding member of the Communist Party of America.

To avoid arrest in the 1920 crackdown on the Communist Party of America, Wolfe fled to New York to assume a new identity in California. He later moved to Mexico, participating in the fledgling Communist movement there. When the American Communist movement cautiously began to emerge from the underground after 1922 without being crushed by legal authorities, Wolfe returned to San Francisco, where he worked as a cook and ran for political office under a pseudonym. Wolfe would eventually find his way home to New York, where he would soon renew his personal and political acquaintance with his Left-Wing Section comrade, Jay Lovestone.

Whereas Jay Lovestone was the educated son of an *émigré* rabbi and Bert Wolfe was a self-made intellectual and pedagogue, the social roots of American-born Ben Gitlow were firmly embedded in the world of the Jewish-American working class. Father Louis had trained to be a civil engineer in the Russian Empire but was forced by economic reality to accept work as a sewing-machine operator in the New York City garment trade, while his mother Kate was employed in home sewing – a form of low-paid piecework labour in which components were sent home for assembly in the tenements each morning, exchanged for the completed output of the previous day.⁵ Both of his parents were radicalised by their Tsarist and American life experiences, joining the Socialist Labor Party during the 1890s.

5 Lender 2012, p. 4.

The family's second child, Benjamin, was born in Elizabethport, New Jersey, but the family moved to a tenement flat on Manhattan's Lower East Side shortly after his birth. The 'red-diaper baby' Gitlow was four years older than Bert Wolfe and six years older than Jay Lovestone – a grand old man of 27 years in 1919 when the Socialist Party of America imploded and the Communist movement emerged. Not only older, Gitlow was a much more established figure in party circles by the time of the 1919 split, having rushed to join the Socialist Party as soon as he was constitutionally able to do so following his eighteenth birthday in December 1909.⁶ While Wolfe was an obscure party schoolteacher and Lovestone an ambitious, albeit largely unknown, former student socialist club leader as the decade of the 1910s came to a close, Gitlow had the gravitas associated with having served a term in Albany as an elected Socialist state assemblyman. A skilled soapbox orator, Gitlow had wholeheartedly given his allegiance to the organised Left-Wing Movement, befriending John Reed and serving as the business manager of the faction's official weekly, *The Revolutionary Age*, in June 1919. Gitlow joined the fight for control of the Socialist Party rather than immediately splitting from it, and then he became a founding member of the Communist Labor Party. He would soon gain further national attention as one of the first political prisoners of the American Communist movement when he was convicted for having violated the New York law against so-called 'criminal anarchism' for his journalistic endeavours.

Unification and the New Factional War

The underground Communist Party emerged from the underground at the end of 1921 under its new 'legal' twin, the Workers Party of America (WPA). The withering underground Party was immediately bolstered by an infusion of new blood. Entire Finnish-, Hungarian- and Yiddish-speaking socialist federations joined the new party *en bloc*, as did a wave of talented English speakers who had remained aloof from the conspiratorial underground Party on principle. The sputtering spigot of Comintern funding of the American movement, substantial but not decisive, began to flow at last. Released in the spring of 1922 from prison on bail, WPA Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg immediately demonstrated the administrative talents he had honed over a 15-year

6 The limitation of Socialist Party members to those eighteen years of age or older is set forth in Article 2, Section 1 of the National Constitution of the Socialist Party... Endorsed by National Party Referendum, 8 August 1908. Gitlow's proud announcement of membership from 1909 appears in his memoir, Gitlow 1940, p. 8.

period as a business-school graduate and administrator for the Socialist Party, efficiently building the Party's internal structure. By 1923 the WPA could count nearly twenty-five thousand dues-paying members, making it the largest radical political party in the United States. The underground CPA, on the other hand, continued to atrophy. Ultimately unable to justify its costly duplicate network of paid functionaries and energy-sapping dual meetings of party units in the face of the WPA's wild success, the underground CPA was terminated, largely unlamented, early in 1923.

This was the brightest moment for American Communism in the 1920s. Membership and dues payments swelled and the American Communists sought to extend their influence both in the political and the trade union sphere. In Chicago, widely-known radical labour organiser William Z. Foster declared himself a Communist, yet still managed to make real inroads organising a left-wing movement in the American Federation of Labor around a platform calling for amalgamation of tiny craft unions into fewer-but-stronger entities organised across entire industries. On the political front, the American communists drew inspiration from the success of the British Labour Party, an umbrella group containing within its structure a number of smaller participating organisations. The establishment of a similar umbrella organisation in America was sought as a potential means of mobilising the nation's millions of workers towards a Communist future.

Joining Ruthenberg and his right hand man Lovestone as the chief adherents of a Farmer-Labor Party in America was John Pepper. Pepper was a Hungarian-born ethnic Jew who, as József Pogány, had been a leader of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic. Forced to flee to Soviet Russia by the White Terror which followed the fall of the Béla Kun government in March 1919, the talented former Education Minister had been dispatched to America just before the ill-fated August 1922 Bridgman Convention of the CPA, ostensibly to assist the Hungarian-language Communist movement. Pepper quickly mastered English and, combining political ambition with personal magnetism, managed to enter the top leadership of the American Communist movement. Pepper, Ruthenberg and Lovestone would be the leading advocates for a costly and exhausting campaign to bring a Farmer-Labor Party into being.

Meanwhile, in the industrial 'second city' of America, Chicago, the idea of establishing a Farmer-Labor Party was viewed by William Z. Foster and other leaders there as only part of a larger mission, which revolved around an expansion of Communist influence in the trade-union movement as the means of best advancing the cause of revolution. Foster's Trade Union Educational League (TUEL) was a Comintern-subsidised parallel organisation to the official Workers Party. It was under nominal control of the Party but in practice

it retained substantial independent control over finances and policy. Working closely with former members of the Industrial Workers of the World, James P. Cannon and Jack Johnstone, Foster's group had made substantial inroads with the left-wing Chicago Federation of Labor, providing committed activists to the cause. Foster and his associates found the Farmer-Labor Party expedient because this was precisely the remedy advocated since 1919 by radical Chicago unionists to break the political gridlock between the old parties in Washington. The planets were briefly aligned. This unity proved transitory. In 1924 the Communists overplayed their hand in their efforts to organise a Farmer-Labor Party, and sectarian decisions emanating from New York were seen as having needlessly split the movement for a Labor Party and permanently alienated those progressive non-communist Chicago trade unionists who Foster and the TUEL had been cultivating.

A bitter factional war for control of the Workers (Communist) Party followed, pitting the bawdy, hard-drinking, rough-cut proletarians and proletarian wannabes of Chicago against the erudite and politically oriented New York intellectuals. The American two-party system was effectively replicated within Communist ranks, with the two factions issuing mimeographed circulars which demonised their opponents and fighting to the last ditch to maintain control of the Party apparatus, which is to say, the Party's assets, agenda, and jobs.

Of critical importance to the Foster group was Alexander Bittelman, a veteran of the Yiddish-language Communist underground. Bittelman was fluent in Russian and adept at reading the tea leaves in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* for the betterment of his political associates. By forging an alliance with Ludwig Lore of the German-language radical daily newspaper, the *Newyorker Volkszeitung*, and a handful of leaders of the massive Finnish Communist Federation, the Chicago-based Foster-Bittelman-Cannon faction was able to briefly win control of the Workers Party in 1924. The Foster group immediately acted to move Party headquarters from New York City to Chicago and to force the removal to Moscow of the group's arch-foe, John Pepper.

This victory proved ephemeral, however, as the Ruthenberg-Lovestone faction was soon able to regain control of the Party with Comintern assistance when they effectively impeached the Foster faction's allies of convenience in the eyes of the Comintern. By the end of 1926, the Ruthenberg-Lovestone group – with the faction's third chair now occupied by the *émigré* German barber and Communist Labor Party founder Max Bedacht – had clearly demonstrated to Moscow that it enjoyed majority support among the Communist rank-and-file. Party headquarters and the official English-language newspaper, *The Daily Worker*, were returned to New York City in January 1927 and the

Majority Group extended its organising efforts, building a firm majority among the rank-and-file and tightening their hold on the organisation's considerable professional staff.

2 March 1927 proved to be a red-letter day for the Workers (Communist) Party of America, when top party leader, C.E. Ruthenberg, stricken by a ruptured appendix, died of the resulting infection at the age of 44. Nature and political parties both abhor a vacuum and Jay Lovestone, number-two man in the Ruthenberg political constellation, was quickly promoted to the post of top Party leader. The loss of the even-tempered and widely respected Ruthenberg exacerbated the factional situation. Even tighter factional discipline was imposed upon the Party's network of paid district organisers, sub-district organisers, industrial organisers, headquarters functionaries and employees of the Party's network of auxiliary organisations. The director of the Party's agitation and propaganda department, Bert Wolfe, wrote on politically important themes in the Party press and steered Party publications along factional lines. The former political prisoner, Benjamin Gitlow, with Dannemora prison now but an unpleasant memory, served as the leading national political face of the Lovestone group, 'balancing' the Communist Party's presidential ticket as the running mate of Presidential candidate William Z. Foster.

Actual differences between the Lovestone-Wolfe-Bedacht-Gitlow majority and the Foster-Bittelman-Johnstone-Cannon opposition were as much a matter of personality and social origins as they were differences over Marxist fundamentals. The New York-based majority was more highly educated, more scholastic in their approach to Party doctrine, more urbane, more oriented towards practical politics and the forging of tactical alliances and grand demonstrations. The Chicago-based opposition saw such political activities as secondary to the primary task of trade-union organisation through the Party's trade-union apparatus – with the politically ambitious and frequently independent Jim Cannon controlling the Party's mass organisation for legal defence, The International Labor Defense, as a personal fief. The Foster minority, savouring a rough-hewn proletarian ambience, loathed Lovestone and the Majority Group as pretentious careerists, politicians and bureaucrats, intellectuals and dandies.

The Comintern was built upon the principle that it was a single-world political party with one and only one affiliate in each nation. This mandatory structure had the effect of deterring a formal split of the American Party in spite of the highly dysfunctional factional war which continuously robbed the organisation of coherence and strength. In the American Communist Party, every political appointment was examined from the perspective of factional politics rather than competence, every Party member was expected to choose

sides. The groups quibbled like petulant children. A stream of appeals were made to the Comintern in Moscow by each in an attempt to discredit the other, while tens of thousands of words were published in the Party press, advancing or refuting this or that factional programme. The American Communist Party remained focused on one thing – not the fight for state power but rather the fight for control of the Party's jobs, agenda, and assets.

Lovestone at Zenith

While the majority basked under an official seal of approval granted by Bukharin at the 1928 World Congress of the Comintern, the Foster Opposition heard an altogether different song emanating from Moscow. A new party regime had begun to emerge in the USSR around a rough-hewn practical politician, Joseph Stalin, and his proletarian and pseudo-proletarian factional associates.⁷ To the Foster-Bittelman Opposition, the future seemed clear – Stalin, a man cut from the same cloth as they, was on the rise. A new day was coming for the minority of the American Communist Party.

In tandem with Stalin's rise to supreme leadership in the USSR, the sixth World Congress of the Comintern had formally reversed the political line of the world-Communist movement. A new revolutionary phase of post-war history was foreseen, a 'Third Period' of revolutionary upsurge which would follow the wild revolutionary fervour of the immediate post-war years and the conservative reaction which had smothered the revolt in 1921. The Foster Opposition sensed the change in wind's direction and tacked hard to the left. On 11 December the *Daily Worker* published a massive nine-thousand-word programme, written largely by Bittelman, which accused the Lovestone Majority of right-wing deviation – a sin of emphasis in official-Comintern doctrine of the day. The majority was charged with threatening the American Communist movement through its organisational timidity. The opposition urged the Comintern to issue a formal injunction to the American Communist Party as a means of rallying it against the Right danger and to move the Party towards the building of new trade unions and organisations of unemployed workers.⁸

While the minority sought its factional salvation in Moscow, Lovestone and the majority sought to solidify their grip on the Communist Party at its forthcoming biannual National Convention. It was hoped that a sufficiently

7 For monographs on the social basis of the Stalin regime, see Fitzpatrick 1979 and Kuromiya 1988. For the best account of the politics of Stalin's rise to power, see Merridale 1990.

8 Bittelman *et al.* 1928, p. 3.

decisive victory at the convention would finally terminate the Foster-Bittelman Opposition. Both sides jockeyed to elect convention delegates in the best or worst American political tradition, each depicting themselves as the most loyal representatives of the Communist International in America, while attacking the other as dangerous ideological deviants. The contest was unequal, with the Majority Group dominating the delegate election process and stacking the convention deck heavily in its favour.

The Foster Opposition retained one ace in the hole, however. In the spring of 1928, Comintern official and former factional chief, John Pepper, had returned to New York City, reinserting himself into the inner circle directing the politics of the American Communist Party.⁹ A political chameleon and inveterate Party schemer, in earlier years Pepper had formerly locked arms and marched with former Comintern President Grigory Zinoviev, a bitter opponent of the Stalin-Bukharin leadership of the Soviet Communist Party. Pepper's final abandonment of Zinoviev had come suspiciously late, and he had thereafter gravitated towards the sophisticated Bukharin, not the gritty Stalin. John Pepper was, in Stalin's eyes, little more than an ideological brother of Bukharin, albeit less trustworthy. Through the logic of Communist politics, Pepper's proximity to Lovestone in the leadership of the American Party now tainted the entire leadership group with the odour of his ideological deviation.

The opposition managed to once again win Pepper's recall by the Comintern in the autumn of 1928. Pepper, a man of logic, delayed the recall as best he was able, enlisting Lovestone in the fight. Pepper had no desire to make a trip half way around the world merely to be cashiered from Comintern work and cast into mundane employment in the state bureaucracy. He preferred, all things considered, to remain in New York City, where he might continue a torrid love affair with his secretary Lillian Gannes, the 19-year-old girlfriend of party youth leader Gil Green.¹⁰ Lovestone chose to oblige Pepper by adding his voice to the effort to overturn the Comintern's recall order – an act which would further tarnish his already poor reputation in Moscow.

As 1928 came to a close, Lovestone's right hand man, Bert Wolfe, was selected by the Majority leadership as the new representative of the American Party to the Comintern. The pair sought to halt the Comintern's clear intentions to intervene with directives to the Party's forthcoming National Convention. Wolfe arrived in Moscow in January 1929 but found himself unable to stop the ECCI preparing a communiqué to America. Wolfe also discovered V.M. Molotov, the number-two figure in the Stalin inner circle, as the new head

9 Draper 1960, p. 291.

10 See Chapter 10 of Sakmyster 2012.

of the Comintern – a clear danger signal for the Lovestone Majority Group in America. Despite its firm organisational control in the United States, in the halls of the Comintern the situation facing the majority faction seemed critical.¹¹

Hubris and Intervention

The sixth National Convention of the Communist Party, held in New York City from 4–10 March 1929, was a decidedly one-sided affair, with the majority doing its best to make the event a final funeral for the Foster Opposition. With the Party's paid staff of approximately one hundred people tightly controlled by the Lovestone group and a multi-step election process used to maximum advantage, 94 of the 104 delegates elected to the Convention professed allegiance to the majority.¹² The spoils of such a decisive convention victory were greatly diminished by the intervention of Moscow, however. An 'Open Letter' to the American Party meant for the edification of the delegates to the sixth National Convention had been dispatched by the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) prior to the event, thereby becoming authoritative. The document was even-handed in its criticism of both American factions, thus effectively undercutting majority intimations of blamelessness, declaring that both sides were 'inclined to regard American imperialism as isolated from world capitalism, as independent from it and developing according to its own laws'. The letter also returned to a Comintern theme that was now nearly a decade old – the urgent necessity of ending immediately the debilitating factional war in the American Party. The majority was deemed too weak in fighting against the Social-Democratic 'Right danger', while the minority was rebuked for its belated parting of the ways with the Trotskyists, casting aside the leader of that movement in America, Jim Cannon, and his band of committed co-thinkers only at the eleventh hour. Actual ideological differences between these feuding clans were little more than 'accessory means in the unprincipled group struggle', in the Comintern's view.¹³

¹¹ Draper 1960, pp. 392–4.

¹² Cable from Jay Lovestone in New York to Bert Wolfe in Moscow, 3 March 1929, Jay Lovestone Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University (hereafter JLP), box 195.

¹³ ECCI 1929, pp. 208–12, reprinted in *The Daily Worker*, vol. 5, no. 364 (March 4, 1929), 3. Drafts of the document are in JLP, box 198, folder 11.

Moreover, this 'Open Letter' would not be the end of the Comintern's meddling in its American section. On 6 March, the third day of the Convention, a cable was received from Moscow which would shake the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) to its foundations.¹⁴ The termination of factionalism in the CPUSA, long promised but never delivered, was to be facilitated by specific organisational actions, including the removal from the American scene of the two individuals viewed as the greatest instigators of the strife – Jay Lovestone of the majority and Alex Bittelman of the minority. Both of these were called to Moscow for service in the Comintern bureaucracy, ostensibly for assignment abroad. This tactic was not new – other feuding parties had been pacified through the removal of factional troublemakers and their placement in advisory or supervisory capacities elsewhere.¹⁵ The ECCI also sought the elevation of opposition leader William Z. Foster to the role of Executive Secretary of the Party. Faced with a choice between open defiance of the Comintern, the loss of its top leader and the promotion of a hated rival to his post, the Majority Group instead attempted to pursue a third course, elevating Foster on the Party's three-person Secretariat to the nominal role of Chairman, but naming Benjamin Gitlow, a top Majority Faction leader, as Executive Secretary. This manoeuvre, suggested by a cable from Wolfe in Moscow, was seen as a means of meeting the call for Lovestone's removal while yielding 'as little as possible'.¹⁶

While Bittelman of the Foster Opposition grudgingly accepted his fate and prepared to go to Moscow for assignment, ousted Party chief Lovestone rejected the order, choosing to fight his removal from America and conscription into the Comintern bureaucracy. Lovestone adeptly made nice at the Convention, officially proposing a resolution on the ECCI's 'Open Letter', which accepted that document 'without reservations', declaring that 'the political questions at issue between the Majority and Minority of the Party no longer exist'.¹⁷

Amidst the stream of telegraphic communications back and forth between Moscow and New York during the time of the March Convention, it had come to notice that the American Commission of the ECCI would shortly take direct

14 Newly named such by the sixth National Convention.

15 Including, quite likely, John Pepper's posting to America.

16 'Lovell' [Wolfe?] in Moscow to Fisher in Brooklyn, cable of 5 March 1929, JLP, box 195. The cable makes clear that Moscow's desire to remove Lovestone was related to the sacking of Bukharin [Magda] in Moscow, owing to Pepper's ideological proximity to both Bukharin and Lovestone.

17 'Motion on Comintern Open Letter, Proposed by Comrade Lovestone and Unanimously Adopted by Sixth National Convention', *Daily Worker*, vol. 6, no. 4, 11 March 1929, p. 1.

testimony with a view to finally settling the American factional situation. Although no date was specified for these hearings, the majority was anxious for an overturn of the Comintern's removal of Lovestone and the selection of a ten-member delegation was rushed through the regularly scheduled 21 March meeting of the Political Committee. The presence of Lovestone and Bittelman, called to Moscow for assignment by the Comintern, was assumed; an additional ten-member delegation was decided upon. A motion moved by Organisation Secretary Jack Stachel, stating that the delegation was to include between five and seven 'proletarian elements', was carried and nominations for the body were taken from the floor. A full Majority Faction slate was first nominated. Then Earl Browder put forward the names of five members of the opposition in an attempt to forge factional balance. Will Weinstone and Bill Foster added several other names to the mix and a vote was taken. Minority hopes for a factionally-balanced delegation proved short-lived as only Foster won election. The other nine members of the delegation to Moscow were to be majority loyalists.¹⁸ Tipped to join Lovestone, Bittelman and Foster were the two other top leaders of the majority, Ben Gitlow and Max Bedacht, as well as a 'proletarian delegation' of seven. These included one woman and two black members – veteran labour organiser Ella Reeve Bloor, former representative to ECCI Otto Huiswoud, and head of the Negro Department of the Young Communist League, Edward Welsh. Fleshing out the delegation were four individuals selected to provide unshakable working-class credentials – former coal miner Tom Myerscough, Detroit auto industry machinist William Miller, agriculture expert Alex Noral, and Pennsylvania steelworker Bill White, a veteran of the American radical movement for a whole three decades. This travelling party was to be joined in Moscow by the Party's representative to the Comintern, Bert Wolfe, and its representative to the Red Trade Union International, Harry Wicks, effectively bringing the actual size of the majority contingent to a dozen, with only Foster and Bittelman representing the minority.

Jay Lovestone was nothing if not a diligent factional organiser. As a delegate to the sixth World Congress of the Comintern, he had witnessed the efforts of Stalin's supporters in a 'corridor congress' to undermine the authority of the head of the Comintern, Nikolai Bukharin. Now with some ECCI leaders clearly seeking Lovestone's removal from the American scene and the installation of Foster as head of the American Party, the situation seemed critical. Facing the loss of Party jobs and assets to a vindictive opposition, Lovestone and his

18 'Minutes of Political Committee Meeting, Thursday, March 21, 1929', RGAS1, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1630, l. 15–16.

closest associates mounted what might anachronistically be termed a 'hostile-takeover defence'. Immediately prior to his departure for Moscow, Lovestone met with acting Executive Secretary Robert Minor and Organisation Secretary Jack Stachel, both committed majority adherents who would temporarily constitute two-thirds of the governing Secretariat of the CPUSA while the delegation was away. Lovestone outlined a plan to protect Party assets from minority control by moving bank accounts and transferring titular ownership of Party buildings to majority loyalists. Trusted Party attorney Joseph Brodsky was to assist in the operation.¹⁹ Simple codes were provided so that the plan could be set in motion through an ostensibly innocuous cabled communication. The Comintern might sanction a takeover of the American Party, Lovestone reasoned, but by staying one step ahead of 'Zig-Zag' Foster and his hated associates, the majority could make sure that the opposition clique was ultimately in actual control of nothing.²⁰

There was nothing particularly original in this scheme. The use of legal trickery to protect Party assets from hated factional rivals was time-tested and true in the American radical movement. Lovestone, Gitlow, Bedacht, and Wolfe had all been on the losing side of just such an action when the outgoing National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party had locked up Party property deeds in the hands of regulars during the 1919 factional war. The same tactics were employed two decades earlier yet to defeat Morris Hillquit and a group of young dissidents who sought to depose the Party regime of Socialist Labor Party newspaper editor Daniel DeLeon. The SLP regulars had then managed to successfully document their ownership of the Party's buildings, presses, name, and logo in a capitalist court, forcing the dissidents to split free and form their own organisation from scratch. Moreover, Jay Lovestone had seen with his own eyes the way that his political mentor, C.E. Ruthenberg, had drained the bank account of the old Communist Party of America when he split the organisation in the spring of 1920, prior to establishing the United Communist Party.²¹ To the inveterate factionalist Lovestone, tactics such as these were simply the way

19 Wolfe 1981, pp. 492–3.

20 According to biographer Edward Johanningsmeier, the majority's sneering nickname for William Z. Foster, 'zig-zag', dated to late 1924 (see Johanningsmeier 1994, p. 221). The name was a witticism connecting the labour leader's unusual middle initial with his propensity to abruptly reverse his previous positions for opportunistic reasons.

21 Ruthenberg's task was made easy by the fact that his ostensibly non-political wife in Cleveland was responsible for laundering and banking funds for the underground CPA. See 'C.E. Ruthenberg in New York to Rose Ruthenberg in Cleveland', 25 March 1920, C.E. Ruthenberg Papers, Ohio Historical Society, microfilm reel 1. Approximately seven thousand dollars was expropriated from CPA coffers by Ruthenberg in his 1920 split.

an established Party leadership defended itself against a hostile insurgency – and such were his own circumstances.

Showdown in Moscow

The Majority Group's delegation to the ECCI left New York for Europe on 23 March 1929. The trip was neither rapid nor smooth, marked by visa delays and the brief incarceration of Ella Bloor and Bill White by the Soviet GPU on a passport discrepancy – an adventure which the pair retrospectively relished.²² The travelling party finally completed their sea- and rail-journey to Moscow on 7 April, only to learn that owing to scheduling conflicts a further four-day wait was to follow.

The Commission of the ECCI assembled to settle the American question was one of the most authoritative in the history of the Third International. The body was chaired by the former head of the Red-Finnish government Otto Kuusinen. Joining Kuusinen would be Joseph Stalin himself, as well as Stalin's number-two man, Viacheslav Molotov; former head of the Soviet Hungarian government Béla Kun; author of the ECCI's 'Open Letter' to the sixth Convention, Sergei Gusev; chief of the Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern) Solomon Lozovsky; Tom Bell of the Communist Party of Great Britain; chief of the Communist Party of Bulgaria and top Comintern functionary, Vasil Kolarov; and Young Communist International leader Rafael Khitarov.

Owing to the factional imbalance of the American delegation, a number of minority supporters already in Moscow at Party-training institutions were allowed to participate in the proceedings, including Charles Krumbein, Harry Haywood, James Ford, and Joseph Zack. Also joining would be Will Weinstone, a recent defector from the Lovestone group who was seen as a possible compromise candidate for the top Party leadership.²³ While the minority's chief ideologist, Alex Bittelman, had been the travelling companion of the delegation to Moscow, he would only briefly participate, accepting his posting to Willi Münzenberg's Anti-Imperialist Department in Germany without further protest and being sent immediately to a conference in Amsterdam. Bittelman would remain abroad for two years before re-entering the CPUSA leadership, purified of factional sins through Comintern service.

²² Gitlow 1940, pp. 528–9.

²³ 'Letter from unknown majority faction author in Moscow to allies in New York, April 22 1929'. Probably written for Robert Minor. Carbon copy in JLP, box 198, folder 12.

The first session began with a speech on behalf of the Majority by Ben Gitlow. Barking the staccato cadences of a soapbox orator, for two hours Gitlow illuminated details of a ten-point written programme which had been prepared for the Commission [*Document 1*]. Couched as a set of preconditions for party unity, this document sought an end to Comintern micromanagement of day-to-day affairs of the American Party and condemnation of the factionalism of the Foster Opposition. The document's fourth point came to the heart of the matter, insisting upon 'the unqualified withdrawal of the unfounded and unjustified charge against Comrade Lovestone as a factionalist and the recognition of his role as a driving force in the organization, development, and unification' of the CPUSA. The 'immediate return of Comrade Lovestone for work in the American Party' was insisted upon. Bill Foster followed with a lengthy report of his own for the minority over the periodic heckling of majority delegates.

Stalin was in attendance for this first gathering of the American Commission, although he missed most subsequent meetings, occupied with preparations for the upcoming Sixteenth Conference of the All-Union Communist Party and other affairs of party and state. Subsequent sessions were consumed with dozens of questions for the Americans made by the members of the American Commission and reports of the various participants. Periodic caucuses of the majority delegation, sometimes featuring cookies and caviar, were held at the Lux Hotel quarters of Bert and Ella Wolfe.²⁴

Originally believed to be a matter which would be resolved in a few days, the hearings before the American Commission dragged on for weeks. Complicating the political situation for the majority, John Pepper arrived in Moscow on 30 April, pushed out of America by both factions of the CPUSA.²⁵ A physical reminder of the Majority Group's alleged ideological deviation, Pepper was given the cold shoulder by his former factional allies. In a letter to his wife, Ben Gitlow lamented how Pepper's 'subjectiveness' and 'individual selfishness of

24 'Benjamin Gitlow to Badana Gitlow, April 13, 1929', Benjamin Gitlow Papers, University of North Carolina-Charlotte, box 2, folder 2.

25 Pepper's refusal to follow Comintern instructions and return to Moscow was condemned by both sides, with the three-member Secretariat denouncing Pepper for his 'childish excuses' at its 1 April meeting. Political Secretary Minor moved to expel Pepper from the CPUSA at the 4 April meeting of the Political Bureau and the action was carried, only to be rescinded on 6 April by the somewhat more expansive Political Committee following Pepper's personal appeal and agreement to return. The matter was turned over instead to the higher authority of the International Control Commission of the Comintern for decision. See: 'Political Committee, Minutes #8, April 8, 1929', RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1630, ll. 37–50.

purpose' had cost the majority very dearly in the halls of power. 'The biggest mistake we made was to welcome him back into our midst', he reflected.²⁶

The 6 May session of the American Commission was attended once again by Stalin. The Soviet leader spoke at length to the gathering, criticising both the Lovestone Majority and the Foster Minority for unrelenting factionalism and their joint underestimation of the American economy's subordination to world capitalism [*Document 2*]. Stalin mocked Majority and Minority alike for their opportunistic professions of fealty to the ruling faction in Moscow, ridiculing both the boastful claims of the Foster Opposition that they were 'Stalinites' and the majority's Convention resolution demanding the removal of Stalin's rival, Nikolai Bukharin, from the Comintern. 'Faction interests above all!', Stalin scoffed.

After Foster and Gitlow gave lengthy closing statements to the full committee, a three-member 'small commission' consisting of V.M. Molotov, Otto Kuusinen and Sergei Gusev was appointed to draft a summary of the commission's findings. Lovestone and Gitlow in particular were jubilant when learning of the composition of this committee, believing that the selection of their friends, Kuusinen and Gusev, foreshadowed a reversal of the Comintern's controversial organisational decisions. Harry Wicks was quick to correct this misconception, however, noting to the majority leaders the ECCI's preference of making use of declarations by known supporters of defeated former positions to bolster the legitimacy of changes in the political line.²⁷

With the ECCI's continued insistence on making changes in the American Party's leadership clearly signalled, the majority continued their fight. On 9 May, Bedacht drafted a declaration for the American delegation declaring that, if the CPUSA leadership were actually removed, 'the members of our Party will have to come to the conclusion that the ECCI wants to destroy the Central Committee and is therefore following a policy of legalizing forever the factionalism of the opposition bloc...' Submitted to the American Commission in writing, Bedacht's declaration was regarded in Moscow as a grave breach of Party discipline and an indication that the majority's factional struggle was to be continued in America in the wake of the American Commission's hearings.

26 'Benjamin Gitlow to Badana Gitlow, April 30, 1929', Benjamin Gitlow Papers, University of North Carolina-Charlotte, box 2, folder 2.

27 'Harry M. Wicks to "Louis" [L.E. Katterfeld?], May 9, 1929', Theodore Draper Papers, Emory University, box 10, folder 8, item 6, pg. 1. Wicks's massive summary of the Moscow events up to that date was mailed to the United States from Helsingfors, Finland, in order to bypass Soviet censorship. It was acquired by historian Theodore Draper from Wicks's widow following her husband's death in 1957.

The final decision of the American Commission was a document known as the Address of the Comintern [*Document 4*]. This thesis not only reiterated the organisational changes previously announced for the American Party, but explicitly attacked the majority's 'unprincipled maneuvers' of the sixth National Convention of the CPUSA, which they had dominated. Comintern representatives to the convention had been hounded, prohibited factional caucuses had been conducted and delegates seeking an honest acceptance of the ECCI's prescriptions had been harassed, the commission charged. While unnamed 'certain leaders of the minority' were also held to be unsuitable for playing similar games, the onus of blame was explicitly laid upon the 'factional leaders of the majority, with comrade Lovestone at the head'. In addition to such unacceptable political behaviour, Lovestone was held to be the purveyor of an ideological deviation, the 'so-called theory of "exceptionalism"', marked by a false belief in the independent strength of the American economy and its political superstructure apart from the growing crisis of world capitalism. The Lovestone Majority was attacked for having pursued 'methods and intrigues which cannot be tolerated in any section of the Comintern and which clearly bear the imprint of petty bourgeois politicianism'.²⁸

The penultimate session of the American Commission was again addressed by Stalin, who in unpublished remarks denied Comintern support for overturning the Majority Group's leadership of the CPUSA in favour of Foster and the minority. The minority was, in fact, a minority – unable to lead or guide the American movement, in Stalin's view. The Comintern delegation to the sixth National Convention of the American Party had erred in not separating itself more clearly from this minority, Stalin said, since the opposition shared all the faults of the majority on matters of principle, while organisationally it was worse.²⁹ Molotov followed Stalin and added his own dissatisfaction with the behaviour of both of the American factions, with Foster having failed to endorse the actions of the Comintern at the sixth National Convention until after the supplemental organisational recommendations were known. The majority, on the other hand, had consorted with John Pepper and opportunistically opined about the Russian situation for the benefit of the group, expanding factionalism through their secret caucus meetings. Lovestone himself had been responsible for declaring that the Comintern had suffered from

28 A typewritten copy of the 11 May 1929 draft letter by Molotov, Kuusinen, and Gusev, 'To All Members of the Communist Party of the United States', may be found in the Bertram Wolfe Papers, Hoover Institution Archive, box 70, folder 14.

29 'Summary of the proceedings of the American Commission' (Author unknown), JLP, box 211, folder 8, unnumbered document, 11.

a 'running sore'. Molotov suggested the removal of Lovestone and Bittelman from America and promotion of Foster to the role of Executive Secretary.³⁰

There followed a final summing up by Foster for the minority and Gitlow for the majority. In his ninety-minute speech, Foster decried the inadequate proletarian composition of the CPUSA and its meagre membership of nine thousand – which he argued should be three or four times larger through competent management. Foster equated the majority's continued rule with the Right danger in America, which was deemed the main enemy by Comintern doctrine of the day. Gitlow responded that Foster's Trade Union Educational League had existed as a factional apparatus and that the minority had eschewed ending the factional war, going so far as to split the Party in the state of California.³¹

The draft letter to America was initially circulated in English translation as a typescript one day prior to the final meeting of the American Commission on 12 May 1929. The document was a punch to the gut of the Majority Faction and the delegates came to the meeting spoiling for a fight. Ben Gitlow delivered a verbal blast, refusing to mildly accede to the content of the letter and vowing to continue his fight against the decision. In reply, Molotov demanded that each member of the American delegation must openly declare their views on the American Commission's letter before leaving the meeting [*Document 3*]. Despite Molotov's insistence, the American delegates refused to make their stand at this time, demanding additional time to make their statements. The Comintern officials took this action to mean that the Majority Group intended to continue its factional war – this time against the ECCI itself.³²

Immediately after the conclusion of the 12 May session, the four top leaders of the Majority Faction – Lovestone, Gitlow, Bedacht and Wolfe – gathered and decided to launch their pre-arranged plan for the transfer of Party bank accounts and property titles to factionally reliable hands. A thinly-coded message was composed to be ferreted out to Berlin for uncensored transmission to the Acting Executive Secretary Minor and Organisation Secretary, Stachel, in New York [*Document 8*]. This *communiqué* asserted that the forthcoming Comintern actions removing key factional members from the Secretariat in favour of the malleable Will Weinstone and Harry Wicks would destroy both the Party and the Comintern in the view of the masses. The American Party

30 'Summary of the proceedings of the American Commission' (Author unknown), JLP box 211, folder 8, 12.

31 'Summary of the proceedings of the American Commission' (Author unknown), JLP box 211, folder 8, 12–13.

32 Draper 1960, pp. 415–16.

was to take no action on any forthcoming Comintern directives until after the Lovestone delegation had returned from Moscow. Concerns were expressed that the delegation would be forcibly detained in Moscow and a ten-day deadline was established for an all-out campaign in the Party press to agitate for the delegation's return. The promotion of Weinstone to the position of General Secretary was predicted. Bank accounts for all of the Party's mass organisations were to be placed in reliable hands if they were not already and Party mailing lists were to be removed from the Party's headquarters. Property deeds and accounts were to be similarly removed from the untrustworthy control of Weinstone and Alfred Wagenknecht, the cable instructed. This message was sent out with an American associate who had earlier been posted to Moscow for GPU service and who was leaving Moscow the next day. The cable was received in New York City on 15 May.

A formal party split had been set in motion, the majority delegates in Moscow believed. Now it was time to finish the fight.

An Appeal Rejected

It remained for the letter of the American Commission to the members of the CPUSA to be amended and ratified by the ECCI through its permanent governing body, the Presidium. This took place at a historic 14 May meeting – a gathering addressed by Joseph Stalin not once, but twice. The gathering was attended by approximately one hundred and fifty people – American delegates, Presidium members, stenographers, and spectators. Included were an array of Americans not directly part of the proceedings, including students at Party-training schools and functionaries in the Comintern and Profintern bureaucracies. The meeting was called to order around 9 pm by Otto Kuusinen, chairman of the ECCI's American Commission, and continued into the wee hours of the morning, interrupted by a break for tea around midnight. Kuusinen began with a reading of the final text of the Address of the Comintern, the final verdict of the two months of hearings in Moscow. Kuusinen was followed to the floor by the new Secretary of the American Party and voting member of the Presidium, Benjamin Gitlow, who read a blistering new statement of the American delegation later published as 'Appeal to the Comintern' [*Document 5*].

Gitlow's 'Appeal' professed the loyalty of the American majority to the Comintern, but charged that the proposed new communication to the CPUSA was 'contrary to the letter and spirit of the line of the sixth World Congress' as well as the factionally even-handed 'Open Letter' to the sixth Convention. The letter would 'serve only to intensify and perpetuate the most destructive

factionalism by giving the opposition a platform against the Central Committee and the Party membership', thereby discrediting the majority in the eyes of the Party rank-and-file and the proletarian masses at large. Instead of attacking Lovestone and the Majority Group, the new letter should bring pressure to force the opposition's 'complete break with Trotskyism', the majority's 'Appeal' insisted. Despite their already secretly dispatching a telegraphic message to Berlin intended to put into motion the factional seizure of Party assets, Gitlow's 14 May 'Appeal' piously declared that the majority repudiated and protested the 'unwarranted charge' that the American delegation was working for a split. Gitlow insisted upon reconsideration of the new document of the American Commission.

Following Gitlow's astonishing failure to yield to the decision of the ECCI, a series of members of the Presidium spoke. Each called for the acceptance of the Comintern's new letter as an accomplished fact. Then a series of Americans studying at Party institutes in Moscow were granted the floor, each demanding that Gitlow, Lovestone and the American Communist Party leadership submit to the Comintern's directives.³³

Among those speaking prior to the vote of the Presidium was Soviet Party leader Joseph Stalin [*Document 6*]. Stalin, already well on the way to complete personal control of the Soviet Communist Party, minced no words. Stalin proclaimed that the American delegation's 'Appeal' represented 'a fresh outburst of factionalism', coming on the heels of the group's 'super-factional' and 'anti-Party' declaration of 9 May. 'The fundamental feature of this declaration is that it proclaims the thesis of non-submission to the decisions of the Presidium of the ECCI', Stalin charged. He added that the majority had pursued its factional orientation ever since 1925, thereby weakening the revolutionary efficacy of the Communist Party, raising factional interests above Party interests and undermining the 'iron discipline' of the Party in the struggle against the class enemy. Stalin scoffed at Gitlow's contention that the majority represented ninety-nine percent of the American Party. The heart of the matter, in Stalin's view, was the choice of allegiance between a political faction and the Communist International.

One by one, the members of the American delegation were called forward and asked whether they would submit to Party discipline and accept the ECCI Presidium's decision embodied in the new letter to America. Only two delegates, Max Bedacht and Alex Noral, relented by accepting the decision. Eddie Welsh stated that he would neither accept nor fight the ECCI's decision, a position regarded as inadequate. The other seven explicitly resisted the call

33 Draper 1960, pp. 417–18.

for discipline. New CPUSA Executive Secretary Gitlow spoke last, vigorously promising to continue the fightback in America.³⁴

Such resistance was a fundamental violation of the Communist Party's rules. Every membership card of the Workers (Communist) Party had included on its cover a lengthy passage on Party discipline:

The decisions of the Communist International and the Party conventions... must be promptly carried out. Discussion of questions over which there have been differences must not continue after the decision has been made.³⁵

Now, even in Moscow, even in the presence of the governing entity of the Communist International itself – a body including among its members the top leader of the venerated All-Union Communist Party – resistance and argument continued. The Presidium of ECCI was enraged, none more so than Joseph Stalin, who stormed to the rostrum and delivered an angry impromptu tirade against the American delegates [*Document 7*].

According to the published version of his speech, Stalin challenged the refusal of the holdouts to submit to Party discipline. He insisted that 'true courage' required the individual to 'overcome one's self and subordinate one's will to the will of the collective'. He singled out Gitlow, Lovestone and Ella Reeve Bloor by name as examples of 'anarchists' and 'individualists' for professing the supremacy of their personal consciences over the duty of Bolshevik discipline. Those resisting the ECCI's decision he called strike breakers, likening the American dissidents to a small minority of workers in a factory who might refuse to submit to the views of the majority regarding collective action in a labour dispute. Stalin ridiculed the idea that the adoption of the new letter to America would mean the death of the American Party, noting that 'because one small factional group is liable to perish politically, it does not follow that the American Communist Party must perish'.

Lovestone, Wolfe and Gitlow later unanimously agreed that the published transcript of Stalin's extemporaneous speech had been dishonestly edited. Lovestone later contended that these published words were expurgated to omit a physical threat. Russians knew how to take care of strike breakers, Lovestone recalled Stalin as having said, for whom 'there is plenty of room

34 Draper 1960, pp. 420–2.

35 For a specimen of a 1928 Workers (Communist) Party membership-card, see Bertram Wolfe Papers, box 1, folder 12.

in our cemeteries'.³⁶ In Gitlow's published recollection, the furious Stalin had been slightly less menacing and more prescient, promising that, upon their return to America, the leaders of this new opposition would find 'the only ones who will follow you will be your sweethearts and wives'.³⁷

An Unequal Battle

The American dissidents were politely detained in Moscow. Incarceration was not necessary, hotel accommodations were sufficient – the trio of leaders were merely summoned as witnesses at the International Control Commission's hearings of the John Pepper affair, which immediately followed closure of the American Commission's hearings. Day after day, Lovestone, Gitlow and Wolfe made their way from their hotels to Comintern headquarters, their testimony intentionally delayed as a pretext to prevent their return to the United States.³⁸ In fact, the political war to the knife in America had never even started, with Jack Stachel and Bob Minor having chosen to ignore the 15 May split telegram rather than launch the Party coup for which it called. On Saturday 18 May, with the text of the ECCI *communiqué* in hand, the Political Committee (Polcom) met and unanimously acted upon Minor's motion to accept and endorse the new document and its recommendations.³⁹ The delegation in Moscow was called upon to immediately withdraw their opposition to the Comintern's decision. Both the *communiqué* and the Party's endorsement of its contents were published forthwith in the pages of the *Daily Worker* [Document 9].

The Communist International took active charge of the American situation by assigning a plenipotentiary, Boris Mikhailov ('Williams'), as an extra member of the Secretariat of the CPUSA to enhance its direct supervision and control of Party decision makers. Those members of the Polcom regarded as reliable – Bedacht, Weinstone and Foster – immediately made their way back to America with Mikhailov, arriving in New York in time to attend a meeting of that body held on 21 May.

Lovestone was chomping at the bit to return to America. On 22 May he made his first formal appeal to return to New York, stating that he was withdrawing his objections to the Comintern's new *communiqué* while continuing

36 Interview of Jay Lovestone by Theodore Draper, 6 October 1953. Cited in Draper 1960, p. 422.

37 Gitlow 1940, p. 561.

38 Gitlow 1940, p. 565.

39 'Political Committee, Minutes #12, May 18, 1929', RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1630, l. 159.

to oppose the organisational proposals for the American Party. This appeal was rejected. On 30 May, a second statement was made repeating his recognition of Comintern authority. This time Lovestone gave every indication that he was prepared to accept assignment by the Comintern, submitting a ranked list of preferences for assignment: England, France, Germany, Argentina, and the Far East.⁴⁰ This proved sufficient. Lovestone's declaration of acceptance was cabled to America the following day.⁴¹ Lovestone requested a two-week leave in America, ostensibly to wrap up his personal affairs before returning to Moscow for assignment.

Lovestone's capitulation opened the door for his factional associates. Gitlow was allowed to leave Moscow by airplane on the morning of 2 June, with the trio of factional leaders first having secretly made arrangements to meet in Paris or Berlin. Gitlow was joined in France by Wolfe about ten days later.⁴² Lovestone was not so fortunate. Max Bedacht – now home in New York – Bob Minor and Jack Stachel had until this point kept the existence of the 15 May 'split cable' a carefully guarded secret, viewing the exposure of their own complicity as a serious political threat. The trio decided that the confession of error was less risky than being discovered withholding such critical information from the Party. The text of the document was turned over to the Central Committee. On 4 June a cable was dispatched to Moscow informing the ECCI of the existence of the split cable, insisting that Lovestone be delayed in Moscow at least until the beginning of July, so that the so-called Enlightenment Campaign against Lovestone and his associates in meetings and in the press could do its work. Apprised of his carefully laid split plans, the Political Secretariat of the ECCI once again summoned Lovestone for a further disavowal of factionalism before he would be permitted to return. Lovestone obliged. A cable was dispatched to New York in which the former Party leader declared that he did 'hereby condemn all resistance to Comintern decisions and call upon the Party membership to take no steps to resist or hinder the decisions of the ECCI' [*Document 11*]. This fledgling American Party leadership was well aware of Jay Lovestone's natural duplicity, however, and a further delay of the former Party leader's return was requested. This took time, however, and in the meanwhile, Lovestone's passport had been returned to him in Moscow, though no exit visa was yet granted.⁴³

40 Jay Lovestone 'To Political Secretariat', 30 May 1929. JLP, box 198, folder 13.

41 Draper 1960, p. 426.

42 Gitlow 1940, pp. 566–7.

43 Draper 1960, pp. 427–8.

The June 1929 issue of the Party's theoretical monthly included a massive lead article revealing in detail the behaviour of Gitlow and Lovestone before the American Commission and the Presidium of the ECCI [*Document 10*]. The two former top majority chiefs were now identified as the leaders of a new 'Anti-Comintern Opposition', joined at the hip with similar opposition groups in Germany and France as part of an 'international Right danger'. A so-called 'Enlightenment-Campaign' against the 'Lovestone group' was immediately launched throughout the Party press presenting a united front of voices from the former Majority and Minority factions endorsing the Comintern's prescription for America and attacking Lovestone and Gitlow for a renegade refusal to submit to Party discipline.

With Bittelman and Lovestone gone and a new sheriff in town, the two factions rather miraculously dissolved themselves. The paid officials of the CPUSA were summoned to New York City for a special week-long conference of functionaries, with the heir apparent for the position of Executive Secretary, Max Bedacht, delivering the keynote address.⁴⁴ Bedacht summarised the events before the American Commission and the need for an immediate end to factionalism. Breaking with tradition, Bedacht launched into a self-criticism of his own Majority faction, noting the way it had opportunistically attempted to curry favour with the Comintern, advanced an analysis overemphasising the independence and strength of American capitalism, and otherwise been in conformity with the ideas and policies of disgraced Comintern leader Nikolai Bukharin, while vacuously condemning Bukharin by name. Bedacht characterised this as 'factionally corrupt logic'.⁴⁵ These and subsequent words were received warmly by the rising star of the former opposition, Earl Browder, who expressed pleasure at hearing a report marked by such 'non-factional feeling'. Acknowledging parallel errors of the minority, Browder summarised the former state of affairs:

I think everyone in our Party has been factional. If he was not factional it meant that he did no work because the only possible way to be active in the Party was to be lined up in a faction. . . . I was rather non-factional for a while – because I was out of the country. And I am sure that that is the only possible way that any member of the American Party could have been non-factional.⁴⁶

44 A partially corrected stenogram of Bedacht's 5 June 1929 report may be found on the CPUSA-Comintern papers, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1626, ll. 1–29.

45 CPUSA-Comintern papers, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1626, l. 24.

46 Earl Browder speech of 7 June 1929. CPUSA-Comintern papers, RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1626, l. 94.

After six years of unremitting factional warfare, the Hatfields and the McCoyes of American Communism had at last been forced to make peace.

Meanwhile in Moscow, former Party leader Jay Lovestone acutely felt his chances of recovering the reins of Party power slipping away owing to his enforced isolation. The situation seemed to him urgent and the choice was made to commit an ultimate act of defiance – a return to America without Comintern authorisation. Knowing that train stations were the subject of close, secret police surveillance, Lovestone made use instead of a trusted associate to obtain a seat aboard a regularly scheduled Deruluft Airways flight between Moscow and the German city of Danzig. Despite his lack of proper exit documents, Lovestone's Party card and ECCI credentials book proved sufficient, and on 11 June he made a successful departure.⁴⁷ This bold act went unnoticed for four days. When it was discovered, Lovestone's impudence was regarded as a most grave breach of discipline, sealing Lovestone's fate with the Comintern.

Lovestone returned to New York but made no attempt to notify the Central Committee of CPUSA of his arrival, instead speaking to small groups of his closest supporters with a view to winning back control of the Communist Party apparatus. Such breaches of discipline provided the CPUSA with ample cause for Lovestone's expulsion, which was announced in the pages of the *Daily Worker* on 27 June 1929 [*Document 12*].

The formation of a new oppositionist Communist organisation which followed was a glacial process. Rather than launching into mass expulsions of suspected Lovestone loyalists, the CPUSA seems to have made every effort to minimise the loss of its cadres through moral suasion rather than repression, pursuing statements of self-criticism and submission. Already by the time the American delegation had left Moscow, three of the ten delegates had recanted their views and accepted Comintern discipline – Alex Noral, Otto Huiswoud and Ella Reeve Bloor.⁴⁸ Now pressure was turned up on those remaining to make their choice. On 21 June an official letter was sent from the Central Committee seeking from Bert Wolfe a statement acknowledging the 'complete correctness of the Comintern Address and the related Comintern decisions on the American question' as well as denouncing the 'anti-Comintern conduct' of the delegation in Moscow. Wolfe responded defiantly, defending his fidelity to 'what our Convention thought was in line with the best interests of the Comintern' – an act which brought his suspension from the Party [*Document 12*].

Lovestone, Gitlow, Wolfe and their co-thinkers pegged their faint hopes for a reversal upon an appeal of the action of the ECCI Presidium to the forthcoming Tenth Enlarged Plenum of the Comintern – a gathering of representatives

47 Wolfe 1981, p. 541.

48 Draper 1960, p. 426.

of the organisation's affiliates from around the world, which approximated the function of World congresses. On 10 July, a lengthy appeal was made in the form of an 'Open Letter' [*Document 13*]. Plans to split the CPUSA were denied, while at the same time, seemingly oblivious to the contradiction, the connection of former factional allies Bedacht, Stachel and Minor with the 15 May machinations was revealed. This 'Open Letter' was published as part of a four-page broadsheet called *Appeal to the Comintern* which might be regarded as the first printed propaganda piece of the 1929 Communist Party Majority Group as an independent political entity. This high-profile effort to move the Comintern to reverse its Executive Committee drew a formal response from the Central Committee of the CPUSA, which decried the efforts to demoralise the Communist rank-and-file by 'injecting them with fresh doses of factional poison'.

Even as this and other political documents of the post-expulsion period began to appear, the CPUSA continued to make primary use of pressure for conformity rather than mass expulsions of its dissidents. Some desperately sought a middle ground balancing conscience and practical politics, blind obedience and revolt. Former American delegate, Tom Myerscough, noted at the end of the first week of August that 'scarcely a day passes that pressure is not brought to bear on me'. Yet, he declared:

I deny a split and I mean it. If I can't fight inside the Party, I won't fight it outside. I won't fight the Party nor the CI, neither now or at any other time, but I won't support the lying methods of the Stachels, Bedachts, etc., no matter how much they 'blink' or 'cry'.⁴⁹

On 12 August the slow-motion split moved to its next phase when the CPUSA's Political Bureau issued ultimatums to those continuing to reject the Comintern's authority, giving forty-eight hours for compliance. Majority Group delegates to Moscow – Gitlow, Wolfe, Welsh, White, Miller and several other top functionaries – refused to comply and were subsequently expelled. In response a mimeographed factional publication was issued by the dissidents which railed against the 'criminal course of splitting and wrecking the Party' [*Document 15*]. These high-level functionaries charged that an 'anti-Party, Gompers-like campaign of terror and expulsion' was being pursued by the Party regime. An appeal was made to the Party membership to rally for Party unity and to summarily reject the current spate of expulsions.

49 'Letter from Tom Myerscough Dated August 8'. Mimeographed factional document, no publisher listed. Copy in Tim Davenport collection.

There followed a period of guerrilla organisation in anticipation of the establishment of a new political party. Mailing lists of auxiliary organisations such as the International Labor Defense and Workers International Relief were surreptitiously obtained from functionaries loyal to Lovestone and Gitlow. During the night of 25–6 August, the Communist Party's National Office was burglarised, with mailing lists, recent Comintern communications, and check-books removed. Despite protestations by Lovestone that the theft had been a black bag operation conducted by the police, tipped off by an informer inside the office, the Communist Party emphatically believed the 'Lovestone Gang' had been responsible. 'The renegades knew precisely which desks to rifle and which to let alone', the office manager of Party headquarters insisted.⁵⁰ The burglary prompted an investigation by the Central Control Commission. The investigation echoed earlier charges that the 'Lovestone group of renegades' had been responsible for the theft. These 'Lovestoneites' would stop at nothing in their fight against the Comintern and the Communist Party, the report of the CCC declared, adding that their activity to undermine the Communist movement had effectively made them 'tools of American imperialism'.⁵¹

In the wake of obvious organising activity, the Central Control Commission ramped up its efforts to eliminate supporters of the 'Lovestone group' from the CPUSA's ranks. A September circular was issued to district committees calling for the immediate expulsion of all 'active agents' and intellectuals who showed support for the opposition, while dealing leniently with those 'rank-and-filers and actual workers', who might have been misled during the controversy. With regard to the latter, the circular letter insisted that 'every effort should be made to save them for the Party, to convince them of their errors, to try to get them back for the line of the CI and of the Party, or to leave the door open for their return'.⁵² One of those quickly scuttled in the September purge was a young Columbia University graduate student named Will Herberg – a man who would later emerge as editor of the Communist Party Opposition's newspaper.⁵³ The purge was carefully targeted with approximately one hundred and twenty-five

50 'Lovestone Gang Leaves Traces of Their Burglary', *Daily Worker*, vol. 6, no. 149, 29 August 29, 1929), 1, 5. The offices of Political Secretary Max Bedacht, Organisational Secretary Jack Stachel, and Labor Secretary William Z. Foster were targeted.

51 'Lovestone's Raid on National Office of Communist Party: Statement of Central Control Commission', *Daily Worker*, vol. 6, no. 166, 18 September 1929, 1, 5.

52 Central Control Commission to All District Executive Committees and District Control Committees, 3 September 1929. RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1709, l. 30.

53 'Denounces Provocative Acts of Lovestone Gang', *Daily Worker*, vol. 6, no. 162, 13 September 1929), p. 4.

Party members being expelled or suspended for 'Lovestoneism' by the Central Control Commission or local units through the third quarter of 1929,⁵⁴ with an official Communist Party history published in 1952 reckoning the total count at about two hundred.⁵⁵ When presented with the alternative of fidelity to a handful of deposed Party leaders or allegiance to the Communist International, the overwhelming majority of American Communists chose the latter path.

Birth of a New Organisation

There was no widely publicised mass meeting or delegated convention to establish a new Communist Party Opposition organisation. Rather, Lovestone, Gitlow and their followers revisited the methods used in a Party split one year earlier by James P. Cannon and his associates, slowly building a new organisation through one-to-one meetings and small gatherings. The process was glacial. Any contact with so-called 'Lovestoneites' was regarded as a political offence by those subject to Communist Party discipline, where even a handshake and friendly small talk in the street between former comrades could result in formal rebuke or disciplinary investigation. It was soon learned that organising active Communist Party members into a new organisation was nearly impossible under such circumstances.

This reality did not halt organisational efforts, however. In October 1929 the 'Communist Party USA – Majority Group' was formally launched in New York City at a meeting grandly styled as an 'Enlarged Session of the National Committee'. The group's name was a tip of the hat to Lenin's 'Bolsheviks' (a term roughly translating as 'Majority men'), themselves launched by a minority split of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.⁵⁶ The name was also selected as a reminder of the role of the group's leading participants in establishing the Communist movement in America and their previous place in the American Party. No braggadocio was involved – those involved in the

54 For a list of expulsions by name, see 'Report of Presidium to Central Control Commission (March to October 1929)', RGASPI, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1704, ll. 1–13. A total of 92 members were expelled for 'Lovestoneism' by the CCC in this period, with another 25 recommended for expulsion, and 10 suspended. This included Chicago district-organiser William Kruse and Seattle district-organiser Jay Sorenson and CCC members Jacob Bentall and Morris Nemser.

55 Foster 1952, pp. 270–1. Foster's work is marked by tendentiousness and poor scholarship and this total should be regarded as a rough estimate rather than an exact count.

56 Gitlow 1940, p. 571.

new organisation were quite conscious of its small size, financial poverty, and difficult prospects.⁵⁷ The name Communist Party (Majority Group) [CPMG] would prove to be just the first of a series employed over the organisation's 11-year life, succeeded in turn by Communist Party USA (Opposition) (1932), Independent Communist Labor League (1937), and Independent Labor League of America (1938).

The so-called Enlarged Session of the National Committee elected a massive 49-member National Council to govern the new organisation. The raw size of this assemblage was clearly intended to imply that a mighty iceberg loomed below the water line, but no such powerful grassroots organisation existed. Heavy in officers and light in enlisted personnel, the initial size of the Communist Party Opposition was later pegged at approximately one hundred and fifty people. Party founder Ben Gitlow indicated that at no point prior to his departure from the organisation in 1933 did the group's total membership exceed about three hundred and fifty.⁵⁸

On 1 November 1929, a new small-format newsprint publication appeared which revisited the name of the official organ of the old Left-Wing Section, *Revolutionary Age*. Edited by Ben Gitlow, the nameplate of the *Revolutionary Age* touted the slogan: 'For Communist Unity in the Revolutionary Class Struggle'. The debut issue of this publication was clearly targeted at the membership of the regular Communist Party rather than a mass audience, and included a continuation of *Daily Worker*-type coverage of the ongoing Gastonia textile strike and a first organisational manifesto, the 'Declaration to the Plenum of the CC' [*Document 17*]. The names of eleven suspended or expelled members of the CPUSA's Central Committee, as well as seven alternate members and seven similarly deposed members of the governing National Executive Committee of the Young Communist League were emphasised. The recent 'anti-Leninist' and 'revisionist' actions of the ECCI were condemned. While two-dollar subscriptions to the bi-weekly *Revolutionary Age* were solicited in the pages of its debut issue, no mention was made of joining the fledgling organisation behind it.

Jay Lovestone would take over the editorship of the *Revolutionary Age* in 1930, with Ben Gitlow assuming the role of National Secretary of the CPMG. The publication would soon expand in frequency, moving to a weekly schedule. Other Party publications would later emerge, including an occasional series of programmatic documents, *Where We Stand* (1934); a magazine dedicated to the International Communist Opposition, *The Road to Communism* (1934); a publication for young members, *Youth Frontier* (1939); and an internal magazine

57 Wolfe 1981, p. 561.

58 Gitlow 1940, pp. 571–2.

for membership debate, *Discussion Bulletin of the Independent Labor League of America* (1939). All of these were produced by means of mimeograph, befitting the limited circulation of the publications.

The majority of members of the CPMG and its successor organisations lived and worked in New York City. There was an organisational presence outside of that urban centre, however, with branches established within the first three years of the CPMG's launch in Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, Baltimore, Hartford, Wikes-Barre, Passaic, Los Angeles, San Antonio and Fort Wayne. The organisation seems to have shown significant growth during the second half of the 1930s. By 1938 the number of branches in New York City branches had increased from four to nine, Philadelphia gaining two new branches and new local organisations launched in Buffalo, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, New Bedford, Frederickstown (PA), Austin, Kokomo, Lansing, Flint, Pontiac, Muskegon and the town of Spivack, Colorado.⁵⁹ While it is unknown to what extent each of these were vital and functioning entities and to what extent they were paper organisations, the expansion in the count of local units would seem to lend credit to Will Herberg's estimate decades after the fact that the Communist Party Opposition's membership had peaked in the ballpark of one thousand to one thousand five hundred members.⁶⁰

59 Alexander 1981, p. 30.

60 Interview of Will Herberg by Bob Alexander, Madison, NJ, 12 December 1973. Cited in Alexander 1981, p. 30.

CHAPTER 4

The Lovestone Split of 1929

Editors' note: for discussion of the material in this chapter, see Chapter Three.

1. Proposals of the Delegation of the Sixth National Convention of the Communist Party of the United States to the American Commission of the ECCI¹

In the name of the Communist Party of the United States, we, the Party delegation elected by authority of the sixth National Convention, herewith make the following proposals as an absolute prerequisite for the speedy achievement of complete Party unification.

The proposals submitted are based upon the decision of the Party Convention fully in line with the 'Open Letter' of the Comintern. The central objective of our motions is to eradicate all factionalism, to complete the unification of the American Party, to liquidate the latest attempts to revive the discredited and unprincipled National Opposition Bloc, hitherto condemned by the Comintern, and led by Foster, Bittelman, and Browder. All evidence and material to substantiate our conclusions are at the disposal of the Comintern. Our proposals are to be considered as an entity and cannot be separated.

1. Recognition and treatment of the American Party as a Party and not as a combination of majority and minority or as a combination of groups. Discontinuance of the practice of keeping the Party suspended on cables regarding the smallest matters, which serves as a decisive factor in the perpetuation of factionalism and the promotion of permanent instability in the Party.

2. Condemnation of the factional actions of the opposition in launching an attack upon the Convention and its decisions, and attempting to revive the factional struggle in the Party by calling upon the membership not to recognise the new Central Committee, the Political Committee, and the Secretariat.

3. Sharp censure of the Party opposition for attacking the new Central Committee as a right-wing and even 'bourgeois' Central Committee in factional documents, in view of the repeated repudiation of this charge by the Comintern, and especially in view of the historical role and character of the opposition in the development of our Party – it has been the source of all

¹ Primarily drafted by Max Bedacht. Presented 10 April 1929 to the American Commission of the Presidium of ECCI. Signed carbon-copy in Bertram Wolfe Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Box 70, Folder 13.

anti-Comintern elements in the history of our Party to date, for example, the notorious opportunists and social democrats Lore, Salutsky and company, the Cannon-Eastman-Trotsky group, the right-wing opportunist Sulkanen-Askeli group which recently entered into a bloc with the Fascists and Social Democrats etc.

4. The unqualified withdrawal of the unfounded and unjustified charge against Comrade Lovestone as a factionalist and the recognition of his role as a driving force in the organization, development, and unification of the Party. We express the will of the Convention and the entire membership in demanding the immediate return of Comrade Lovestone to work in the American Party. This is absolutely necessary in order to avoid a serious undermining of the Party leadership and a consequent perpetuation of the two-party system of permanent factionalism.

5. The Comintern should instruct the Foster-Bittelman Opposition to make its break with Trotskyism complete and final, by immediately ending its conciliation, tolerance, and protection of Trotsky elements in its ranks.

6. The Comintern shall review the role and status of the Trade Union Educational League with a view to aiding the Party in changing the Trade Union Educational League from a faction apparatus *within* the Party *against* the Party to a mass organization serving the center for the left-wing of the American labor movement.

7. The Comintern shall review the relations between the Profintern and the American Party with a view to putting an end to the role of comrade Lozovsky as the inciter, director, and guiding spirit of the opposition's continued faction struggle against the American Party.

8. Categorical instructions under pain of severest discipline shall be given to all Lenin School students to cease their factional activities in connection with the life of the American Party. The discontinuance of the practice of inviting and recognizing Lenin School students as 'representatives' of factions in the American Party and their admission to official Comintern bodies in this capacity. In this sense, the Party demands the immediate withdrawal of Comrade Zack from the Lenin School and his return to the United States, and the investigation of the Lenin School as a source of factionalism with a view toward taking similar action against any other students equally culpable.

9. The Comintern shall review the work of Comrades Pollitt and Dengel in the American Party Convention and subsequent thereto, with a view to passing the judgment upon the conduct of these comrades in (a) branding the Party as an anti-Comintern Party, (b) denouncing the Convention as an anti-Comintern Convention, (c) denouncing the Convention of proletarian delegates as 'low-down bastards and ignorant tools', (d) in sabotaging the work of the Convention by refusal to participate in efforts to formulate political

resolutions, (e) in attacking the Party leadership as 'Ruth Fischerites' on the very first day after their arrival, (f) in serving as caucus organizers and advisers of the Opposition and serving as active agents in helping to reorganize the National Opposition Bloc, (g) in endeavouring to build a new group in the Party in defiance of Comintern decisions under the dangerous, unprincipled slogan of building a 'Comintern Group' in the American Section of the Comintern, (h) endeavouring to give a platform for the opposition to continue the factional struggle prohibited by the Comintern after the Convention.

10. The Delegations demands that Comrade Lozovsky shall be instructed to resign from this Commission in view of the fact that he is factional, prejudiced, and is himself a cardinal issue in the American Party controversy to be investigated by this Commission, and therefore is unfit to pass judgment on the question of the best interests of the Party and the Comintern.

The above demands represent the will of the overwhelming majority of the membership of the Party and most vital needs of the American section of the Comintern. The delegations insist upon its members being given ample opportunity to present all material and arguments in substantiation of the above motions.

With communist greetings,

Max Bedacht
 Ella Reeve Bloor
 Benj. Gitlow
 Otto E. Huiswoud
 Jay Lovestone
 William Miller
 Tom Myerscough
 Alex Noral
 Edward Welsh
 W.J. White
 Bertram D. Wolfe,
 Representative to the ECCI.

H.M. Wicks,
 Representative to the Profintern.

2. Speech Delivered by Joseph Stalin in the American Commission of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, 6 May 1929²

Comrades, since quite a few speeches have been delivered here and the political position of both groups in the Communist Party of the United States of America has been sufficiently clarified, I do not intend to speak at great length. I shall not deal with the political position of the leaders of the majority and the minority. I shall not do so since it has become evident during the course of the discussion that both groups are guilty of the fundamental error of exaggerating the specific features of American capitalism. You know that this exaggeration lies at the root of every opportunist error committed both by the Majority and the Minority Group. It would be wrong to ignore the specific peculiarities of American capitalism. The Communist Party in its work must take them into account. But it would be still more wrong to base the activities of the Communist Party on these specific features, since the foundation of the activities of every Communist Party, including the American Communist Party, on which it must base itself, must be the general features of capitalism, which are the same for all countries, and not its specific features in any given country. It is on this that the internationalism of the Communist Party is founded. Specific features are only supplementary to the general features. The error of both groups is that they exaggerate the significance of the specific features of American capitalism and thereby overlook the basic features of American capitalism which are characteristic of world capitalism as a whole. Therefore, when the leaders of the majority and the minority accuse each other of elements of a Right deviation, it is obviously not without some measure of truth. It cannot be denied that American conditions form a medium in which it is easy for the American Communist Party to be led astray and to exaggerate the

² First published in the pamphlet *Stalin's Speeches on the American Communist Party* (Communist Party USA (ed.) 1931, pp. 11–20).

strength and stability of American capitalism. These conditions lead our comrades from America, both the majority and the minority, into errors of the type of the Right deviation. Owing to these conditions, at times one section, at others, the other section, fails to realize the full extent of reformism in America, underestimates the leftward swing of the working class, and, in general, is inclined to regard American capitalism as something apart from and above world capitalism. That is the basis for the unsteadiness of both sections of the American Communist Party in matters of principle.

Having made these general observations, let us now pass to practical political questions.

What are the main defects in the practice of the leaders of the majority and the minority?

Firstly, that in their day-to-day work they, and particularly the leaders of the majority, are guided by motives of unprincipled factionalism and place the interests of their faction higher than the interests of the Party.

Secondly, that both groups, and particularly the majority, are so infected with the disease of factionalism that they base their relations with the Comintern not on the principle of confidence, but on a policy of rotten diplomacy, a policy of diplomatic intrigue.

Let us take a few examples. I will mention such a simple fact as the speculations made by the leaders both of the majority and the minority regarding the differences within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. You know that both groups of the American Communist Party, competing with each other and chasing after each other like horses in a race, are feverishly speculating on existing and non-existing differences within the CPSU. Why do they do that? Do the interests of the Communist Party of America demand it? No, of course not. They do it in order to gain some advantage for their own particular faction and to cause injury to the other. Foster and Bittelman see nothing reprehensible in declaring themselves 'Stalinites', thereby demonstrating their loyalty to the CPSU. But, my dear comrades, that is disgraceful. Do you not know that there are no 'Stalinites', that there must be no 'Stalinites'? Why does the minority act in this unseemly fashion? In order to entrap the Majority Group, the group of Comrade Lovestone, and to prove that the Lovestone group is opposed to the CPSU and, hence, to the basic nucleus in the Comintern. That is, of course, incorrect. It is irresponsible. But the minority cares nothing about that; their chief aim is to ensnare and discredit the majority in the interests of the faction of the minority.

And how does the Lovestone group act in this connection? Does it behave more correctly than the Minority Group? Unfortunately not. Unfortunately, its behaviour is even more disgraceful than that of the Minority Group. Judge

for yourselves. The Foster group demonstrate their closeness to the CPSU by declaring themselves 'Stalinites'. Lovestone perceives that his own faction thereby may lose something by this. Therefore, in order not to be outdone, the Lovestone group suddenly performs a 'hair-raising' feat and, at the American Party Congress [sixth Convention], carries through a decision calling for the removal of Comrade Bukharin from the Comintern. And so you get a game of rivalry on the principle of who will outdo whom. Instead of a fight on principles you get the most unprincipled speculation on the differences within the CPSU.

Such are the results of a policy which places the interests of faction higher than the interests of the Party.

Another example. I refer to the case of Comrade Pepper. You are all more or less acquainted with that case. Twice the Comintern demanded Comrade Pepper's return to Moscow. The Central Committee of the American Communist Party resisted and, in fact, ignored a number of decisions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International regarding Pepper. Thereby the majority of the American Communist Party demonstrated its fellowship with Pepper, whose opportunist vacillations everybody knows. Finally, a delegation from the Executive Committee of the Communist International sent to the sixth Congress of the American Communist Party advances again, in the name of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, the immediate recall of Comrade Pepper. The majority under the leadership of Lovestone and Gitlow again resists this demand and does not find it necessary to carry out the decision of the ECCI. Foster's group utilises this situation against the Lovestone group, stating that the Majority Group within the American Communist Party is against the Comintern. The Lovestone group finally senses that its interests might suffer should it find itself in a position of opposition to the Comintern. Accordingly, the Lovestone group performs another 'hair-raising' feat and expels Comrade Pepper from the Party! The same Pepper whom only the day before they had defended against the Comintern. Another game of rivalry – who can spit furthest. How can we explain the resistance to the decisions of the Comintern regarding Pepper on the part of the Majority Group? Not, of course, in the interests of the Party. It was exclusively in the interests of the majority faction. Why is it that the majority made a sudden right-about-face and unexpectedly expelled Pepper from the Party? Was it in the interests of the Party? Of course not. It was purely in the interests of the Lovestone faction, who were anxious not to surrender a trump-card to their enemy, namely, the Foster-Bittelman factional group. Faction interests above all!

The Foster group want to demonstrate their devotion to the CPSU by declaring themselves 'Stalinites'. Very good. We, the Lovestoneites, will go still further

than the Foster group and demand the removal of Comrade Bukharin from the Comintern. Let the Fosterites try to beat that! Let them know over there in Moscow that we Americans know how to play the stock-market.

The Foster group want to demonstrate their solidarity with the Comintern by demanding the carrying out of the decision of the Comintern regarding Pepper's recall. Very good. We, the Lovestoneites, will go still further and will expel Comrade Pepper from the Party. Let the Fosterites try to beat that! Let them know over there in Moscow that we Americans know how to play the stock-market.

There you have the fruits of the factionalism of the majority and the minority.

But, Comrades, the Comintern is not a stock-market. The Comintern is the holy of holies of the working class. The Comintern, therefore, must not be confused with a stock-market. Either we are Leninists, and our relations one with another, as well as the relations of the sections with the Comintern, and vice versa, must be built on mutual confidence, must be as clean and pure as crystal – in which case there should be no room in our ranks for rotten diplomatic intrigue; or we are not Leninists – in which case rotten diplomacy and unprincipled factional struggle will have full scope in our relations. One or the other. We must choose, comrades.

In order to show how pure Communist morals are depraved and defiled in the course of a factional struggle, I could cite yet another fact as, for instance, my conversation with comrades Foster and Lovestone. I refer to the conversation that took place at the time of the Sixth Congress. It is characteristic that in correspondence with his friends, comrade Foster makes this conversation out to be something secret, something which must not be talked about aloud. It is characteristic that comrade Lovestone, in bringing his charges against comrade Foster, in connection with this conversation, refers to his talk with me and boasts here that he, comrade Lovestone, unlike Foster, is able to keep a secret and that under no conditions would he consent to divulge the substance of his conversation with me. Why this mysticism, dear comrades? What purpose does it serve? What could be so mysterious in my talk with comrades Foster and Lovestone? Listening to these comrades, one might think I spoke to them of things which one would be ashamed to relate here. But that is stupid, comrades. What is the purpose of this mystical game? Is it difficult to understand that I have nothing to conceal from comrades? Is it difficult to understand that I am ready at any moment to tell comrades the substance of my conversation with Foster and Lovestone from beginning to end? What will then become of the famous mysticism so zealously spread here by Foster and Lovestone?

What did comrade Foster talk to me about? He complained of the factionalism and unprincipledness of comrade Lovestone's group. What did I answer

him? I admitted these sins on the part of the Lovestone group, but at the same time added that the same sins were characteristic of the Foster group. On the basis of this, comrade Foster arrives at the singular conclusion that I sympathise with the Minority Group. Where is the foundation, one asks? On what grounds is Foster pleased to think that I fail to see the defects of the Minority Group and even sympathise with that group? Is it not obvious that with comrade Foster the wish is father to the thought?

What did Comrade Lovestone talk about? Of the worthlessness of the Foster-Bittelman group. What did I answer? I answered that both groups were suffering from serious defects and advised him to take measures to liquidate factionalism. That was all. What is so mysterious here that cannot be spoken about aloud?

Is it not strange that out of these simple and clear facts the comrades of the majority and the minority make a secret worthy of arousing the laughter of serious-minded people? Is it not obvious that there would be no mystification if there were no factional atmosphere poisoning the life of the American Communist Party and defiling simple and pure Communist morals?

Or let us take, for instance, another fact. I refer to the talk with comrade Lovestone that took place the other day. It is characteristic that comrade Lovestone has also been spreading absurd rumours about this conversation of mine and making a secret of it. Why this incomprehensible passion for the 'mysterious'? . . . What did he speak about to me the other day? He asked that the Presidium of the ECCI should rescind the decision to withdraw him from America. He said that he, Lovestone, would undertake to carry out the proposed decision of the Presidium of the ECCI, provided it would not be directed sharply against the leaders of the majority of the Communist Party of America. He promised to be a loyal soldier of the Comintern and to prove it in practice, if the Comintern would give him the necessary instructions. He said he was not looking for high positions in the American Communist Party, but only begged that he should be tested and given the opportunity to prove his loyalty to the Comintern. What did I reply to this? I told him that experiments in testing the loyalty of comrade Lovestone to the Comintern have already been going on for three years, but no good has come of them. I said it would be better both for the Communist Party of America and for the Comintern, if comrades Lovestone and Bittelman were kept in Moscow for a time. I said that this method of action on the part of the Comintern was one of the surest means of curing the American Communist Party of factionalism and saving it from disintegration. I said that although this was my opinion, I agreed to submit the proposal of comrade Lovestone to the consideration of the Russian comrades, and undertook to inform him of the opinion of the Russian comrades.

That seems perfectly clear. Yet comrade Lovestone again tries to make a secret of these obvious facts and is spreading all kinds of rumours regarding this conversation.

It is obvious that there would be no such mystification and simple things would not be turned into mysterious legends if it were not for a policy which places the interests of a faction higher than the interests of the Party, the interests of diplomatic intrigue higher than the interests of the Comintern.

In order to put an end to these foul methods and place the American Communist Party on the lines of Leninist policy, it is necessary first of all to put an end to factionalism in that Party.

That is the conclusion to which the above-mentioned facts bring us. What is the solution?

Comrade Foster mentioned one. According to his proposal, the leadership should be handed over to the minority. Can that solution be adopted? No it cannot. The delegation of the Executive Committee of the Communist International committed an error when it sharply dissociated itself from the majority, without at the same time dissociating itself equally sharply from the minority. It would be very unfortunate if the Commission of the Presidium repeated the error of the delegation of the ECCI. I think the Commission of the Presidium of the ECCI should, in its draft, dissociate itself both from the errors of the majority and from the errors of the minority. And for the very reason that it must dissociate itself from both, it must not propose to turn over the leadership to the minority. Hence the proposal of Comrade Foster with all its implications, automatically falls to the ground.

The American delegation proposed a different solution, directly contrary to the proposal of comrade Foster. As you know, the proposal of the American delegation consists of 10 points. The substance of this proposal is to the effect that the leadership of the majority should be fully rehabilitated, the factional work of the majority should be considered correct, that the decision of the Presidium of the ECCI to withdraw comrade Lovestone should be annulled, and that thus the practice of suffocating the minority should be endorsed. Can this solution be adopted? No, it cannot, for it would mean not eradicating factionalism, but elevating it to a principle.

What then is the solution?

The solution consists in the following:

1. The actions and the proposals of the delegation of the ECCI must, in the main, be approved, with the exclusion from the proposals of those points which approximate to the proposals of comrade Foster.
2. An open letter must be sent in the name of the ECCI to the members of the American Communist Party setting forth the errors of both sections of the Party and sharply emphasizing the question of eradicating all factionalism.

3. The action of the leaders of the majority at the Convention of the Communist Party of America, particularly on the question of Pepper, must be condemned.

4. An end must be made to the present situation in the Communist Party of America, in which the questions of positive work, the questions of the struggle of the working class against the capitalists, questions of wages, working hours, work in the trade unions, the fight against reformism, the fight against the Right deviation – when all these questions are kept in the shade, and are replaced by petty questions of the factional struggle between the Lovestone group and the Foster group.

5. The Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the American Communist Party must be reorganized, with the inclusion of such workers therein as are capable of seeing something more than the factional struggle, the struggle of the working class against the capitalists, who are capable of placing the interests and the unity of the Party above the interests of individual groups and their leaders.

6. Comrades Lovestone and Bittelman must be summoned and placed at the disposal of the Comintern in order that the members of the American Communist Party should at last understand that the Comintern intends to fight factionalism in all seriousness.

Such is the solution, in my opinion.

A word or two regarding the tasks and the mission of the American Communist Party. I think, comrades, that the American Communist Party is one of those few Communist Parties in the world upon which history has laid tasks of a decisive character from the point of view of the world-revolutionary movement. You all know very well the strength and power of American capitalism. Many now think that the general crisis of world capitalism will not affect America. That, of course, is not true. It is entirely untrue, comrades. The crisis of world capitalism is developing with increasing rapidity. It cannot but affect American capitalism. The three million now unemployed in America are the first swallows indicating the ripening of the economic crisis in America. The sharpening antagonism between America and England, the struggle for markets and raw materials and, finally, the colossal growth of armaments – that is the second portent of the approaching crisis. I think the moment is not far off when a revolutionary crisis will develop in America. And when a revolutionary crisis develops in America, that will be the beginning of the end of world capitalism as a whole. It is essential that the American Communist Party should be capable of meeting that historical moment fully prepared and of assuming the leadership of the impending class struggle in America. Every effort and every means must be employed in preparing for that, comrades. To that end, the American Communist Party must be improved and bolshevized. To that

end we must work for the complete liquidation of factionalism and deviations in the Party. To that end we must work for the reestablishment of unity in the Communist Party of America. To that end we must work in order to forge real revolutionary cadres and a real revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, capable of leading the many millions of the American working class toward the revolutionary class struggles. For that end all personal factors and factional considerations must be laid aside and the revolutionary education of the working class of America must be placed above all.

That is why I think, comrades, that the most serious attention must be paid to the proposals of the Commission of the Presidium of the ECCI for your consideration here, for the aim of these proposals is to render the Communist Party of America a healthy Party, to eradicate factionalism, to create unity, to strengthen the Party and to bolshevisize it.

3. Speech Delivered by V.M. Molotov in the Session of the American Commission, 12 May 1929³

Confidential – Not for publication

Comrades, the draft letter on the situation in the Communist Party of America was handed out yesterday. It has been in the hands of the delegates for about twenty-four hours. The object of this draft is to direct the Party, the forces of both sections of the Party, towards the struggle for the liquidation of factionalism, a struggle for the unanimous carrying out of the line of the Comintern. However, what we have heard just now from comrade Gitlow, as a representative of the Majority Group, clearly indicates that the group is by all means trying to keep its faction intact, to keep its faction as a separate group.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Commission, and comrade Kuusinen as the reporter, appealed to the delegates here, asking them to answer as to whether they accept the draft letter as a basis after having closely studied it, as to whether they undertake unconditionally to submit to the decisions of the Comintern, as to whether they will carry these decisions into operation. Even to this question, which is elementary for each Communist, we see that the comrades give no answer, that they want to make first clear their factional position, that they want to secede as a group, so that the line of their faction may be more sharply counterposed to the line defended by the Comintern.

It seems to me that this is a bad sign, that is, it shows that the comrades do not go along the path desired by the Comintern, the path which must be followed by the Communist Party of America in order to fulfil the great tasks which confront it at the present time.

Recording this fact, it seems to me that the Commission must decide today whether the draft letter is adopted as a basis and then proceed with the consideration of the various amendments that some of the comrades will make.

3 Mimeographed transcription in Jay Lovestone Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Box 211, Folder 8.

The question of the struggle against factionalism, the question of struggle for the main line of the Comintern, is so clear that each of the comrades here must declare openly and sincerely before taking the matter up in their caucus, before elaborating on the question in their faction, as to whether he is in favor of combating factionalism which corrodes the Party, which menaces the development of the American working class. We must get a clear and concise answer to this question right here at this session.

4. Address by the Executive Committee of the Communist International to all Members of the Communist Party of the United States, 14 May 1929⁴

Dear Comrades,

The Executive Committee of the Communist International, together with the delegation of the sixth Convention of the Communist Party of the United States, has very carefully discussed the situation in the American Communist Party. Having given to all delegates the fullest opportunity for expressing their views and for making proposals, having carefully examined all material presented, and having considered the question from all aspects, the Executive Committee of the Communist International deems it necessary to place in all seriousness the situation within the Party before all members of the Communist Party of the United States.

The 'Open Letter' of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the sixth Convention of the American Communist Party [4–10 March 1929], which placed before it the fundamental tasks arising in connection with the accentuation of the inner and outer contradictions of American imperialism in the present period, pointed out the necessity of the Party converting itself as soon as possible from a numerically small propagandistic organization into a mass political party of the working class, which particularly at the present juncture is indissolubly connected with the intensification of the struggle against the Right danger. This 'Open Letter' declared categorically that the fundamental prerequisite for the successful carrying out of these tasks is the cessation of the unprincipled struggle that has gone on for many years.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International is compelled to record that at the Convention itself, and after it, not only was there no appreciable result achieved in the matter of doing away with factionalism, but on the contrary, the factional struggle has become still more accentuated. Due

4 Passed by the American Commission of the Presidium of ECCI, 12 May 1929. Approved by the Presidium of ECCI on May 14, 1929. Published in the *Daily Worker*, 20 May 1929, p. 3.

to the unprincipled factional struggle, the sixth Convention of the American Communist Party failed to produce the results which it should have produced in regard to bolshevization and the establishment of a healthier condition within the American Communist Party. Many of the most important political questions and tasks confronting the Party were not discussed by the Convention. The errors of the majority [Lovestone faction] and of the minority [Foster faction] of the Party were not explained at the Convention as they should have been, as a matter of Bolshevik self-criticism. The Party was not mobilised for the struggle against the Right danger. No consolidation of all forces of the Party for a struggle against factionalism was secured at the Convention. On the contrary, this Convention, which was composed of the best proletarian elements of the American Communist Party who uphold the line of the Comintern, became an arena for unprincipled maneuvers on the part of the top leaders of the majority as well as on the part of the leaders of the minority. The Convention was forced off of the line proposed by the Comintern and was mobilised for purposes of further factional struggle by both groups.

A gross distortion of the line of the Comintern was the theory inoculated into the Convention, alleging that organizational proposals of the Executive Committee of the Communist International were in contradiction to its political letter instead of being a necessary guarantee for carrying out the line of that 'Open Letter' to the American Communist Party. A clearly factional distortion of the meaning of the organizational proposals of the Executive Committee of the Communist International were also the efforts to interpret them as the handing over the leadership of the Party to the minority, which was not and is not intended by the Comintern, since the fundamental task of the 'Open Letter' and the organizational proposals of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the sixth Convention was the consolidation of the Party on the basis of the line of the Comintern in the direction of the struggle against the factionalism of both groups. The minority of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the United States endeavoured to make the 'Open Letter' and the organizational proposals of the Executive Committee of the Communist International an instrument for getting the leadership of the Party into its own hands. The Executive Committee of the Communist International condemns these attempts of the minority which show that it factionally distorted the meaning of the 'Open Letter' of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and its organizational proposals and that certain leaders of the minority have shown themselves unfit to play a role of a uniting factor in the struggle of the Party against factionalism in conformity with the directions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

It is the factional leaders of the majority, with Comrade Lovestone at the head, that are mainly responsible for making use of the Convention for factional purposes, for misleading honest proletarian Party members who uphold the line of the Comintern, for playing an unprincipled game with the question of the struggle against the Right danger in the Comintern and in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, for inadmissible personal hounding of the delegation of the Comintern at the Convention, for the organization of caucus meetings of the delegates of the majority in direct contradiction with the 'Open Letter' of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and in spite of verbal acceptance of that letter, for hounding those comrades who departed from the majority faction and unconditionally accepted the line of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, for a campaign against certain responsible comrades of the minority who were carrying out the line of the Executive Committee of the Communist International – for all these methods and intrigues which cannot be tolerated in any section of the Comintern and which clearly bear the imprint of petty-bourgeois politicianism.

Both factions of the American Communist Party have been guilty of Right errors. Both factions show serious deviations to the right from the general line of the Comintern, which creates the danger of an openly opportunist Right deviation crystallizing within the Party.

Since the sixth World Congress of the Communist International [17 July–1 September 1928] the majority of the Central Committee of the American Communist Party has been committing a series of gross Right errors pointed out in the 'Open Letter' of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. These errors found their expression in overestimating American imperialism and putting the question of inner and outer contradictions in a wrong way, which led to the obscuring of the inner contradictions of American capitalism, in underestimating the swing to the Left of the American working class, in underestimating American reformism which led to weakening the struggle against it, in underestimating the Right danger in the American Communist Party, in substituting in place of the question of the Right-opportunist danger only the question of Trotskyism, in dealing with the question in a manner which led to the obscuring of the Right danger.

The minority of the Central Committee of the American Communist Party was committing, in regard to the questions dealing with the crisis of American capitalism and the swing of the masses to the Left, 'Left-', but in reality 'Right'-opportunist errors; it dissociated the development of the inner contradictions of American capitalism from its external contradictions and from the general crisis of world capitalism, and in regard to the question of the struggle against

the war danger it was sliding down to petty-bourgeois pacifist slogans ('no new cruisers' – comrade Bittelman). The minority of the Central Committee was unable to dissociate itself at the right time from Trotskyism and did not properly struggle against it. An ideological lever of Right errors in the American Communist Party was the so-called theory of 'exceptionalism', which found its clearest exponents in the persons of comrades Pepper and Lovestone, whose conception was as follows: there is a crisis of capitalism but not of American capitalism, there is a swing of the masses leftwards but not in America, there is the necessity of accentuating the struggle against reformism but not in the United States, there is a necessity for struggling against the Right danger but not in the American Communist Party. And yet the present period, when the process shaking the foundation of capitalist stabilization is going on, signifies for the United States that it is being ever more closely involved in the general crisis of capitalism. In America, too, the fundamental contradiction of capitalism – the contradiction between the growth of productive forces and the lagging behind of markets – is becoming more accentuated. The bourgeoisie is increasing its efforts to find a way out of the growing financial crisis by means of rationalization, i.e. by the increased exploitation of the working class. The internal class contradictions are growing; the struggle for markets and spheres for the investment of capital against other imperialist states is becoming more accentuated; there is a feverish growth of arguments and the war danger is getting nearer and nearer. With a distinctness unprecedented in history, American capitalism is now exhibiting the effects of the inexorable laws of capitalist development, the laws of the decline and downfall of capitalist society. The general crisis of capitalism is growing more rapidly than it may seem at first glance. The crisis will also shake the foundations of the power of American imperialism.

Under these conditions, the theory of 'exceptionalism' is a reflection of the pressure of American capitalism and reformism which is endeavouring to create among the mass of workers the impression of absolute firmness and the 'exceptional' imperialist might of American capital, in spite of its growing crisis, and to strengthen the tactic of class collaboration, in spite of the accentuation of class contradictions. The Executive Committee of the Communist International points out that not only the mistakes of the majority but also the most important mistakes of the minority were based on the conception of American 'exceptionalism'. While it records the political mistakes of both groups as well as the growth of the Right danger in the American Communist Party, the Executive Committee of the Communist International regards as a factional exaggeration the claim alleging that the group of the majority as a whole is a bearer of the Right tendency as well as the claim alleging that the

minority group represents the Trotskyist deviation. There are, in the ranks of both groups, elements with strong Right tendencies which either show themselves openly or are masked by 'Left' phraseology. Neither of the two groups has carried on a proper struggle against these Right tendencies in the ranks of its own faction, and the factionalism of both groups has been the great impediment to the development of the necessary self-criticism within the Party and to the political education of the Party members in the spirit of Bolshevik steadfastness based upon principle. A factional lack of principle which is also an expression of opportunism finds its expression in the fact that both groups were putting the interests of their faction above the interests of the Party. On the strength of this, the American Communist Party is confronted now in all sharpness with the question of the danger of the political disintegration of the present leading cadres, which threatens to undermine the whole work of the Party. A characteristic manifestation of rotten factional diplomacy in regard to the Communist International is the attitude of the majority of the Central Committee of the American Communist Party on the question of comrade Pepper's conduct. In spite of repeated decisions of the Comintern to remove comrade Pepper from work in the American Communist Party, a comrade who repeatedly exhibited opportunistic tendencies, the majority of the Central Committee violated these decisions of the Comintern, shielding the political errors and gross breaches of discipline which were being committed by comrade Pepper. The inconsistency and lack of principle in the attitude of the leaders of the majority of the Central Committee in regard to Comrade Pepper found vivid expression in the fact that the Central Committee of the American Communist Party expelled him from the Party, pointing out that 'the political platform of Comrade Pepper is no doubt the real cause of his cowardly disinclination to do his duty and go and place himself at the disposal of the Comintern' (decision of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the American Communist Party approved by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee), whereas a few days later, in spite of the political characteristic given to comrade Pepper [sic], the Central Committee reinstated him into the ranks of the Party. In 1929 the majority as well as the minority were engaged in inadmissible, unprincipled speculation with questions of the situation in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and in the Comintern. If the minority speculated in the version as if it were the only group in the American Communist Party sharing the attitude of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in its struggle against Right deviations, the majority, making use of methods of rotten diplomacy, went to the lengths of unprincipled maneuvering in regard to this question. This found expression in the Convention adopting a resolution which proposed organizational measures against the Right

deviation at the initiative of comrades Lovestone and Gitlow without the least attempt to inform the delegates of the Convention about the situation in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. And subsequently to their arrival in Moscow, the delegation of the majority in the person of comrade Gitlow made a declaration which practically disavows this resolution and upholds the slanderous attacks of the Right elements of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of the Comintern.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International draws special attention to attacks entirely unworthy of a Communist, which during the Convention comrade Lovestone permitted himself to make on the leadership of the Comintern (comrade Lovestone's reference to 'a running sore' in the apparatus of the Executive Committee of the Communist International). The Executive Committee of the Communist International emphasises that these attacks of Comrade Lovestone represent a repetition of slanderous attacks upon the Comintern made by Right opportunists.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International draws special attention to the declaration of 9 May in which comrades Bedacht, Lovestone and others tried to discredit beforehand the decision of the Comintern by stating that 'the Executive Committee of the Communist International wants to destroy the Central Committee and is therefore following a policy of legalizing forever the factionalism of the opposition bloc and is recommending that it carry it on also in the future'.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International holds that this most factional and entirely impermissible anti-Party declaration of comrades Bedacht, Lovestone and others represents a direct attempt at preparing a condition necessary for paralysing the decisions of the Comintern and for a split in the Communist Party of America. The same manifest determination to oppose their faction to the Comintern found expression also in a second statement of 14 May submitted by the delegation from the Convention, only in more diplomatic form. The assertion of the leaders of the majority faction concerning their 'loyalty' to the Comintern contained in that statement was clearly exposed at the very session of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International at which the statement was reported, by the refusal of the majority of the signers to unconditionally carry into effect the decisions contained in this letter. The Executive Committee of the Communist International declares that, in case the authors of the declaration refuse unconditionally to submit to the decisions of the Comintern and to actively put them into practice, the Executive Committee of the Communist International will be forced to adopt all measures necessary to put a stop to all attempts at split-

ting the Party, to secure unity in the ranks of the Communist Party of America and to realize the decisions adopted by the Comintern.

In the course of years, the Executive Committee of the Communist International had repeatedly demanded the liquidation of factionalism in the Communist Party of America. Thus for example in the resolution of the fifth Enlarged Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1926 [21 March–6 April] on the American question, among other things it is stated: 'To enable the American Communist Party to fulfil its historic mission the first prerequisite is complete and unconditional termination of the factional fight within the Communist Party not in words but in deeds'.

In its resolution of 1 July 1927, the Executive Committee of the Communist International again reminded the Party that 'this demand was not being carried out seriously enough' and that there is still in the Party 'an impermissible situation of faction formation', which may lead to 'a crisis in the Party'.

The sixth World Congress of the Comintern in 1928, while mentioning in its political thesis that in the Party there is to be 'observed a slackening of the long-standing factional struggle', nevertheless found sufficient ground for deciding that 'the most important task confronting the Party is to put an end to factional strife – which is not based on any serious controversies on points of principle'.

Finally the Executive Committee of the Communist International, with the object of carrying out the decisions of the World Congress, and in view of the fact that the inner-Party situation in the United States became accentuated once again, had addressed an 'Open Letter' to the American Party in December 1928 and demanded from the Convention then pending that it begin at last to really carry out the decisions of the Comintern concerning the liquidation of factionalism. All of this was absolutely of no avail so far. The leaders of the majority as well as the leaders of the minority of the Central Committee, who repeatedly gave their verbal pledges to the Executive Committee of the Communist International that they will carry out the decisions of the Comintern, have systematically violated the decisions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International and their own pledges. Therefore the Executive Committee of the Communist International, approving in the main the work of the delegation of the ECCI to the sixth Convention of the American Communist Party, resolves to adopt the following measures:

1. To place the majority as well as the minority of the Central Committee under the obligation of dissolving immediately all factions and ceasing all factional work. To call upon all the organizations of the American Communist Party to secure the putting into practice of this instruction, not shrinking from

the application of the most severe disciplinary measures in regard to factionalism, including expulsion from the Party.

2. Comrades Lovestone and Bittelman, as extreme factionalists of the majority and minority, to be removed for a time from work in the American Communist Party.

3. To reject the demand of the minority of the Central Committee regarding the calling of a Special Convention.

4. To recognise as necessary the reorganization and extension of the Secretariat of the Central Committee on a basis of securing real collective, non-factional activity, and to render to the Central Committee every possible help in the matter of putting an end to all factionalism in the Party.

5. To turn over comrade Pepper's case to the International Control Commission for consideration.

The Executive Committee of the Communist International calls upon all members of the Party to get together for the struggle against unprincipled factionalism in the Party, to be able to carry on the struggle against the Right danger, for the healing and bolshevization of the American Communist Party, for the genuine carrying out of inner-Party democracy and proletarian self-criticism. With these objects in mind, the Party must initiate on a large scale a discussion of the questions concerning the situation within the Party and the political tasks confronting the Party. It is necessary to carry on, in all Party and Young Communist organizations, a thorough enlightenment campaign concerning the decisions of the sixth Congress of the Comintern, the 'Open Letter' of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the sixth Convention of the Communist Party of America, and concerning the present address of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. In the course of this enlightenment campaign, while waging a struggle against all opportunists who want to fight the Comintern, while uniting in that struggle all honest and disciplined comrades who are loyal to the Communist movement, the Communist Party must concentrate its attention on the most important questions of revolutionary struggle of the proletariat of America – on questions of unemployment, the struggle for social insurance, wages, working hours, work in existing trade unions, work for the organization of new unions, the struggle against reformism, and the struggle against the war danger. The Communist Party of the United States must strengthen its work in regard to recruiting and retaining in its ranks new cadres of workers that are joining the Party, especially of the working youth. It must widen its agitational and organizational work in the big plants in the main branches of industry and among the Negroes and must secure for the Party an independent and leading role in the industrial struggles

of the working class that are developing, organizing the unorganized workers in the process of the struggle.

It is only by relentless struggle against unprincipled factionalism, which is eating into the vitals of the Party, only by consolidating the whole Party for carrying out its fundamental practical tasks on the basis of the line of the Comintern and by more energetic struggle against the Right danger that the American Communist Party will become the genuine Bolshevik vanguard of the American proletariat and will be converted into a mass political party of the American workers, in the ranks of which inner-Party democracy is being actually unfolded while at the same time an iron proletarian discipline is strengthened, to which all organizations and each individual member unconditionally submits; in the ranks of which is practiced the submission of the minority to the majority on the basis of the Party's perusal of the line and practical directions of the Comintern. Such a party will be capable of leading the American proletariat to victorious struggle against capitalism.

With communist greetings,

Executive Committee Communist International

5. Statement by the Delegation Chosen by the Sixth National Convention of the Communist Party of the United States of America to Present the Views of the Party Convention to the Executive Committee of the Communist International, 14 May 1929⁵

To the American Commission:

Dear Comrades,

1. The American Party under its present leadership has an unquestionable record of unbroken loyalty and devotion to the Communist International. When we were a minority, we conducted an equally vigorous struggle for the Communist International and against all its hidden and open enemies within the Party.

It is the present leadership of the Party which has worked unceasingly since the very inception of our Party, ten years ago, to enhance the prestige of the Comintern, not just among the Party masses but also in the ranks of the proletariat in general. It is the present leadership of the Party which has, in the face of the bitterest resistance from the opposition led by comrades Foster and Bittelman, fought and driven out such notorious enemies of the Communist International as [Ludwig] Lore, [Jacob] Salutsky, [Elis] Sulkanen, [Henry] Askeli, [Max] Eastman and [James] Cannon.

5 Typescript-carbon in Jay Lovestone Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Box 211, Folder 7. First published as 'Appeal to the Comintern' in a broadsheet factional newspaper in July 1929, striking the signatures of Max Bedacht, Ella Reeve Bloor, Otto Huiswoud and Alex Noral, who had subsequently recanted.

This attitude and policy of unswerving loyalty to the Comintern have been, and will continue to be, basic and axiomatic for us.

To us, loyalty to the Comintern has never been merely a matter of formal discipline or fractional expediency. Our attitude to the Comintern takes sole root in our firm Leninist conviction that the Communist International represents the collective, centralised Communist will, based on the experiences, capacities, and composite qualities of what is best in all sections, in the various Parties. The Communist International is the World Communist Party, with every one of its sections an organic part.

2. Even the new draft resolution recognises that the sixth National Convention of our Party 'was composed of the best proletarian elements of the American Communist Party, who uphold the line of the Communist International'.

It is by the express authority of this Convention that we speak here in the name of the overwhelming majority of the membership, in the name of the best and most experienced Communist forces, in the name of the most tried party cadres in the United States. *The official delegation of this Convention representing the will and desires of this Convention, takes this occasion again to declare emphatically that we unreservedly support the line of the sixth World Congress of the Comintern and the 'Open Letter' of the ECCI to our National Convention*, particularly the basic decisions of the sixth World Congress on the nature of the Third Period, the precarious character of capitalist stabilization, the sharpening of the war danger and the necessity for the intensification of the struggle against the Right danger as the main danger in the Comintern and the American Party.

It is the present leadership of our Party which has combated vigorously all reservations to the line of the sixth Congress. The present grave crisis in our Party is due primarily to the fact that in utter, flagrant violation of the decisions of the sixth World Congress, the opposition was allowed a practically free hand in making its reservations (Johnstone's declaration) to the decisions of the sixth World Congress, its platform of unprincipled factional struggle against the CEC. In emphasizing this fact, we do not for a moment seek to hide or minimise our own serious mistakes in sharpening the factional situation in our Party.

3. It is our sincere conviction that the new draft letter to our Party ['The Address of the Comintern'] is contrary to the letter and spirit of the line of the sixth World Congress and the line of the 'Open Letter' to our National Convention. This is clearly shown in the fact that the new draft letter takes a diametrically opposite attitude towards our Party, makes an estimate of our

Party's work and leadership totally at variance with the line and decisions of the sixth World Congress and the ECCI's 'Open Letter' to our Convention . . .

• • •

Nothing has happened since the sixth World Congress, nothing has occurred since the Convention received the ECCI's 'Open Letter' to warrant any fundamental change in the estimate of our Party, its achievements and its leadership. Quite the contrary. Since the sixth National Convention our Party has only further proven that the sixth World Congress was correct in its line toward us – the campaign led by our Party in the Southern textile struggles, the mass May Day street demonstrations, the great headway made in proletarianizing our Party leadership, the substantial gains made in the establishment of factory nuclei and shop papers.

• • •

We repudiate and protest most emphatically against the unwarranted charge that the delegation representing the sixth National Convention of our Party is working for a split. We have always stood for the unity of the Party and will fight to maintain the unity of the Party. The present leadership has founded and built the Party. It has the confidence of the entire active Party membership that is doing the Party's work, that is bearing the Party's banner in the class struggle. At the sixth National Convention of our Party, over ninety percent of the membership expressed itself in no unclear terms for the policies of the leadership in mass activities and unity.

The Comintern acknowledged, immediately after the ninth Plenum [9–25 February 1928] and at the sixth World Congress, that under the guidance of the Central Committee there was to be noted a weakening of factionalism and a consolidation of the Party. This has been, and will continue to be, our line. Our line is the line of Communist unity. It is the unprincipled factional Foster-Bittelman opposition attacking the Party without justification that has been working – fortunately with no success – for the disruption of our Party.

• • •

4. We have made every effort to convince the American Commission that what is needed is a calm, careful consideration of the serious difficulties and problems confronting our Party, with a view of arriving at an understanding in

Moscow among all American comrades for utilizing all forces for the Party. So far we have failed in our efforts.

We stand ready and are anxious to make every effort to achieve these ends – to secure Party unity, to wipe out factionalism and caucuses, to sharpen the fight against the Right danger, to build a powerful, organic section of the Comintern in the US – one that is equal to the tremendous historical tasks that confront a Communist Party in the country of the dominant imperialism.

The new draft letter, if accepted by us, would make it absolutely impossible for us to continue as effective workers in the Communist movement. Upon this right to give our best services and energies to the Comintern, to the Leninist proletarian revolution, we insist.

• • •

We beg the comrades of the Commission to consider carefully our earnest plea for Party unity and loyalty to the Comintern. The Party is in a grave crisis. The Party needs the united and strongest efforts of all Communists to save the situation, to ensure the unity of the Party, the prestige and effectiveness of the Comintern in the US.

With communist greetings,

Max Bedacht
Jay Lovestone
Ella Reeve Bloor
Benjamin Gitlow
Otto Huiswood
William Miller
Tom Myerscough
A. Noral
Edward Welsh
W.J. White
B.D. Wolfe

6. First Speech Delivered by Joseph Stalin in the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, 14 May 1929⁶

Comrades, we are faced with a unique fact, worthy of the most serious attention. A month has already passed since the American delegation arrived in Moscow. For almost a whole month we are occupied with it, we are discussing the problems of the American Communist Party and are indicating methods of clearing up the situation that has arisen. Every member of the delegation has had the opportunity to exercise his right of expressing his views and criticizing the comrades who were not in agreement with him. You know that this right was exercised by them to the full, without the slightest hindrance on the part of the ECCI. You know that comrade Lovestone insisted that the Russian comrades should express their views. You know that the Russian comrades have already had their say on the essential aspects of the question. Accordingly, the Commission has fulfilled all the conditions requisite for finding a solution and bringing the matter to a conclusion.

And what do we find? Instead of a serious attitude to the matter in hand, and a readiness to put an end finally to factionalism, we have a fresh outburst of factionalism among the members of the American delegation and a fresh attempt to undermine the cause of unity of the American Communist Party. A few days ago we were still without the draft of the decision of the Comintern on the American question. All we had then was an outline of the general principles for a decision, an outline directed toward the eradication of factionalism. But instead of waiting until the draft decision appeared, the American delegation, without wasting words, broke out with the declaration of 9 May, a declaration of a super-factional character, an anti-Party declaration. You know with what hostility the members of the Commission of the Presidium of the ECCI met this declaration. You know that the Commission criticised it to shreds. One might have expected that the American delegation would give thought to this and correct its errors. In fact, the direct contrary occurred. The

6 First published in Communist Party USA (ed.) 1931, pp. 21–35.

draft of the proposals of the Commission, which has now been distributed to all the members of the Presidium of the ECCI and the American delegation, no sooner appeared than the American delegation broke out with the new declaration of 14 May, a declaration still more factional and anti-Party than that of 9 May. You are, of course, acquainted with this declaration. Comrade Gitlow read it here during the course of his speech. The fundamental feature of this declaration is that it proclaims the thesis of non-submission to the decisions of the Presidium of the ECCI. That means that the extreme factionalism of the leaders of the majority has driven them into the path of insubordination, and hence of warfare against the Comintern.

It cannot be denied that our American comrades, like all Communists, have the right to disagree with the draft of the decision of the Commission and have the right to oppose it. And as long as they confine themselves to the exercise of this right there is not, and cannot be anything wrong. But the trouble is that the declaration of 14 May does not stop there. It goes further; it considers that the fight must be continued even after the draft becomes the decision of the Presidium of the ECCI. Therefore, we must put the question squarely to the members of the American delegation: when the draft assumes the force of an obligatory decision of the Comintern, do they consider themselves entitled not to submit to that decision? We have argued the question in the Commission for a whole month; we have had a number of discussions; we have spent a tremendous amount of time on the matter, time that might have been more profitably employed; we finally arrived at the point when the time for discussion was over and were on the eve of adopting a decision which must be compulsory for all members of the Comintern. And now the question arises: do the members of the American delegation, as Communists, as Leninists, consider themselves entitled not to submit to the decision of the ECCI on the American question?

That is the crux of the matter, comrades. Permit me now to proceed to examine the declaration itself.

This declaration of 14 May was drawn up rather craftily. I do not doubt that this declaration was written by some sly attorney, by some petty-fogging lawyer. Judge for yourselves. On the one hand, the declaration avows complete loyalty to the Comintern, the unshakable fidelity of the authors of the declaration to the Communist International, not only in the past, not only in the present, but also in the future. That, of course, is excellent, provided it is not an empty promise. On the other hand, the declaration states that its authors cannot assume responsibility for carrying out the decision of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. It plainly states:

‘There are valid reasons for our being unable to accept this new draft letter, to assume responsibility before the Party membership for the execution of this

letter, to endorse the inevitable irreparable damage that the line of this new draft letter is bound to bring to our Party'.

If you please, on the one hand, complete loyalty; on the other, a refusal to carry out the decision of the Comintern. And this is called loyalty to the Comintern! Pettifogging practice, indeed. Can you picture a Communist, not a paper Communist, but a real Communist, avowing loyalty to the Comintern and at the same time refusing to accept responsibility for carrying out the decisions of the Comintern? What sort of loyalty is that? What is the reason for this duplicity? This hypocrisy? Is it not obvious that this weighty talk of loyalty and fidelity to the Comintern is necessary to comrade Lovestone in order to deceive the 'membership'?

One involuntarily recalls the unforgettable Mr. Chamberlain who, on the one hand, is for peace and reduction of armaments and, on the other, does everything possible to insure that armaments should increase and preparations for war proceed at full speed. The chatter about peace is necessary to Chamberlain in order to cover up the preparations for a new war. Loud talk about loyalty and fidelity to the Comintern is necessary to comrade Lovestone in order to cover up preparations for the fight against the decisions of the Comintern. Comrade Lovestone, of course, is not Chamberlain. There is not, and cannot be, any analogy between them. But the fact that his 'maneuver' recalls the 'maneuvers' of Chamberlain should be a sufficient warning for him.

But the declaration does not stop there. It goes further. Passing from the defensive to the offensive, it proclaims the necessity of fighting the decisions of the Executive Committee of the Comintern as decisions which, it is declared, are against the line of the sixth Congress of the CI. It plainly states that the draft decision, the draft for the 'Open Letter' of the Comintern, which here in the Presidium meets with general approval, and which in all likelihood will be approved by the Presidium of the Comintern – it plainly states that this draft is contrary to the letter and spirit of the line of the sixth World Congress of the CI. The declaration plainly states that: 'The new draft letter . . . makes an estimate of our Party work' (i.e. the work of the Communist Party of America) 'and leadership totally at variance with the line and decisions of the sixth World Congress . . .'

I shall not attempt to show that these assertions of the declaration are a petty and unworthy libel on the Comintern and its executive organs. It is also not worth attempting to show that it is in fact the present leaders of the majority of the Communist Party of America who have violated, and continue to violate, the basic decisions of the congresses of the Comintern and its executive organs on the question of liquidating factionalism in the American Communist Party. Comrade Kuusinen has fully shown in his speech that both factions of

the American Communist Party, and particularly the majority faction, have, beginning with 1925, systematically violated the fundamental decisions of the congresses of the Comintern regarding the liquidation of factionalism and the establishment of unity. One has only to acquaint oneself with the resolutions of the congresses of the Comintern to convince oneself that in the leaders of the present majority we have incorrigible violators of the spirit and letter of the decisions of the Comintern.

As to the sixth Congress of the Comintern, in its decision on the American Communist Party it plainly declares that 'the chief task of the Party is to put an end to the factional struggle, which is not based on any serious differences of principle'. What has the group of comrade Lovestone done to carry out this decision of the sixth Congress of the Comintern? You can see for yourselves, comrades, that so far it has done nothing in this direction. On the contrary, it has done, and is doing, everything possible to transform the decision of the sixth Congress into a scrap of paper.

Such are the facts.

And if, in spite of all these facts, the declaration nevertheless accuses the Presidium of the ECCI of violating the 'letter and spirit of the line of the sixth World Congress', what does it mean? It means that the authors of the declaration desire to oppose the decisions of the Presidium of the ECCI to the line of the sixth World Congress, which they themselves violated and continue to violate. And why do they do that? In order, pharisaically concealing themselves under the flag of the sixth Congress, to conduct a fight against the decisions of the Presidium of the ECCI. In this way the authors of the declaration, so to speak, declare: we, the Lovestone group are for the sixth Congress, but the draft for the 'Open Letter' of the Presidium of the ECCI contradicts the line of the sixth Congress; therefore, we must, and shall, fight the decision of the Presidium of the ECCI.

The authors of the declaration apparently think there is something new in this deceitful 'maneuver' and that we shall fail to decipher what is the concealed meaning of their 'maneuvers'. Not so, comrades. They are mistaken in their reckoning. The history of the Comintern shows that comrades who have moved away from the Comintern always begin with just such 'maneuvers'. When Zinoviev moved away from the Comintern he began by counterposing the line of the Comintern to the decisions of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. He did that in order to conceal his fight against the Executive Committee by talk regarding the line of the Comintern. The same is true of Trotsky, who began his divergence from the Comintern by drawing a distinction between the line of the Comintern and the decisions of the Executive Committee and the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. That is the old,

outworn path of opportunism, as old as the world itself. It is regrettable that the authors of the declaration have been drawn into this same path.

In counterposing the Comintern to the Executive Committee of the Comintern, the authors of the declaration hope, as Zinoviev and Trotsky once hoped, to sever the Executive Committee of the Comintern from the Comintern. A ridiculous and foolish hope! The authors of the declaration apparently forget that the interpreters of the decisions of the Comintern Congresses are the Executive Committee and its Presidium alone, not them. The authors of the declaration are mistaken if they think that the American workers will believe their interpretation rather than the interpretation of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern.

Such is the true character of the declaration of the American delegation.

Hence, the declaration of the American delegation is a platform of struggle against the line of the Comintern in the name of opportunist vacillation, in the name of unprincipled factionalism, in the name of the violation of the unity of the American Communist Party.

Let us turn to the draft of the Commission.

What is the basis for the draft of the Commission which is now offered for the consideration of the Presidium of the ECCI? It is based on the idea of maintaining the line of the Comintern within the ranks of the Communist Party of America, on the idea of bolshevizing the American Communist Party, on the idea of fighting the deviation from the Marxist line and, above all, the Right deviation, on the idea of Leninist party unity, and finally, and above all, on the idea of completely liquidating factionalism. For it must after all be realized, comrades, that factionalism is the fundamental evil of the American Communist Party.

In the history of the revolutionary movement of the working class we Bolsheviks have not infrequently had occasion to conduct a factional fight against opportunism. It was at the time when the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks found themselves in one common Party, when the Bolsheviks were obliged to organize a faction in order to break down the authority of the Social Democrats, to organize a split against Social Democracy and to create our own Communist Party. At that time factionalism was useful and essential. But now? Now it is a different matter. Conditions have changed basically. At present we have our own monolithic Communist Parties, sections of the Communist International. Now factionalism is dangerous and harmful, because it weakens communism, weakens the communist offensive against reformism, undermines the struggle of communism against Social Democracy in the labor movement. Our American comrades evidently do not understand the fundamental difference between the past and the present.

Wherein consists the evil of factionalism within the ranks of a Communist Party?

Firstly, in that factionalism weakens the Party spirit, it dulls the revolutionary sense and blinds the Party workers to such an extent that, in the factional passion, they are obliged to place the interests of faction above the interests of the Party, above the interests of the Comintern, above the interests of the working class. Factionalism not infrequently brings matters to such a pass that the Party workers, blinded by the factional struggle, are inclined to gauge all facts, all events in the life of the Party, not from the point of view of the interests of the Party and the working class, but from the point of view of the narrow interests of their own faction, from the point of view of their own factional kitchen.

Did not comrade Lovestone and his friends know that they should have held aloof from Pepper, and that they should have repudiated him so as not to compromise themselves as revolutionaries? Why, in spite of several warnings given by the Comintern, did they not repudiate him at the time? Because they acted first and foremost as factionalists. Because every bit of splinter, every piece of string is to be valued in a factional fight, even every poor soldier, even every poor officer. Because even people like Pepper may serve a purpose in a factional fight. Because factional blindness compelled them to place the interests of their faction above the interests of the Party.

Did not comrade Foster know that he should have held aloof from the concealed Trotskyites that were in his group? Why, in spite of repeated warnings, did he not repudiate them at the time? Because he behaved first and foremost as a factionalist. Because in the factional fight against the Lovestone group even concealed Trotskyism might be useful to him. Because the blindness of factionalism dulls the Party sense in people and makes them indiscriminate in the means that they employ. It is true – such a policy is bad and irreconcilable with the interests of the Party. But factionalists as a rule are inclined to forget the interests of the Party – all they can think of is their own factional point of view.

Secondly, in that factionalism interferes with the training of the Party in the spirit of a policy of principles; it prevents the training of the cadres in an honest, proletarian, incorruptible revolutionary spirit, free from rotten diplomacy and unprincipled intrigue. Leninism declares that a policy based on principles is the only correct policy. Factionalism, on the contrary, believes that the only correct policy is one of factional diplomacy and unprincipled factional intrigue. That is why an atmosphere of factional struggle cultivates not politicians of principle, but adroit factionalist manipulators, experienced rascals and Mensheviks, smart in fooling the 'enemy' and covering up traces. It is true

that such 'educational' work of the factionalists is contrary to the fundamental interests of the Party and the working class. But the factionalists do not give a rap for that – all they care about is their own factional diplomatic kitchen, their own group interests. It is therefore not surprising that politicians of principle and honest proletarian revolutionaries get no sympathy from the factionalists. On the other hand, factional tricksters and manipulators, unprincipled intriguers and backstage wire-pullers and masters in the formation of unprincipled blocs are held by them in high honor.

Thirdly, factionalism, by weakening the will for unity in the Party and by undermining its iron discipline, creates within the Party a peculiar factional regime, as a result of which the whole internal life of our Party is robbed of its conspirative protection in the face of the class enemy, and the Party itself runs the danger of being transformed into a plaything of the agents of the bourgeoisie. This, as a rule, comes about in the following way: let us say that some question is being decided in the Politburo of the Central Committee. Within the Politburo there is a minority and a majority which regard each decision from their factional standpoint. If a factional regime prevails in the Party, the wire-pullers of both factions immediately inform the peripheral machine of this or that decision of the Politburo, endeavoring to prepare it for their own advantage and swing it in the direction they desire. As a rule, this process of information becomes a regular system. It becomes a regular system because each faction regards it as its duty to inform its peripheral machine in the way it thinks fit and to hold its periphery in a condition of mobilization in readiness for a scrap with the factional enemy. As a result, important secret decisions of the Party become general knowledge. In this way the agents of the bourgeoisie attain access to the secret decisions of the Party and make it easy to use the knowledge of the internal life of the Party against the interests of the Party. True, such a regime threatens the complete demoralization of the ranks of the Party. But the factionalists do not care about that, since for them, the interests of their group are supreme.

Finally, the evil of factionalism consists in the fact that it completely nullifies all positive work done in the Party; it robs the Party workers of all desire to concern themselves with the day-to-day needs of the working class (wages, hours, the improvement of the material welfare of the workers, etc.); it weakens the work of the Party in preparing the working class for the class conflicts with the bourgeoisie and thereby creates a state of affairs in which the authority of the Party must inevitably suffer in the eyes of the workers, and the workers, instead of flocking to the Party, are compelled to quit the Party ranks. And that is what we are now observing in the American Communist Party. What have the factional leaders of the majority and the minority been chiefly occu-

pied with lately? With factional scandalmongering, with every kind of petty factional trifle, the drawing up of useless platforms and sub-platforms, the introduction of tens and hundreds of amendments and sub-amendments to these platforms. Weeks and months are wasted lying in ambush for the factional enemy, trying to entrap him, trying to dig up something in the personal life of the factional enemy, or, if nothing can be found, inventing some fiction about him. It is obvious that positive work must suffer in such an atmosphere, the life of the Party becomes petty, the authority of the Party declines and the workers, the best, the revolutionary-minded workers, who want action and not scandal-mongering, are forced to leave the Party.

That, fundamentally, is the evil of factionalism in the ranks of a Communist Party.

Hence the most important task of the American Communist Party is to put an end to factionalism and definitely cure itself of this disease.

It is on this that the draft of the Commission presented for your consideration is based.

A few words regarding the vaunting manner in which the group of Comrade Lovestone speaks and represents itself here in the name of the whole Party, in the name of 99 percent of the Communist Party of America. They never represent themselves otherwise than in the name of 99 percent of the Party. One would think they have that 99 percent in their pockets. That is a bad manner, comrades of the American delegation. Let me remind you that Zinoviev and Trotsky also at one time played trumps with percentages, and assured everybody that they had secured, or at any rate, would secure, a 99-percent majority in the ranks of the CPSU. You know, comrades, in what a farce the vain glory of Trotsky and Zinoviev ended. I would therefore advise you not to play trumps with percentages. You declare that you have a certain majority in the American Communist Party and that you will retain that majority under all circumstances. That is untrue, comrades of the American delegation, absolutely untrue. You had a majority because the American Communist Party until now regarded you as the determined supporters of the Communist International. And it was only because the Party regarded you as the friends of the Comintern that you had a majority in the ranks of the American Communist Party. But what will happen if the American workers learn that you intend to break the unity of the ranks of the Comintern and are thinking of conducting a fight against its executive bodies? That is the question, dear comrades! Do you think that the American workers will follow your lead against the Comintern, that they will prefer the interests of your factional group to the interests of the Comintern? There have been numerous cases in the history of the Comintern when its most popular leaders, who had greater authority than you, found themselves

isolated as soon as they raised the banner against the Comintern. Do you think you will fare better than these leaders? A poor hope, comrades! At present you still have a formal majority. But tomorrow you will have no majority and you will find yourselves completely isolated if you attempt to start a fight against the decisions of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. You may be certain of that, dear comrades.

Comrade Lovestone is spoken of as a talented leader, as the founder of the American Communist Party. It is said that the Communist Party of America cannot get along without comrade Lovestone, that the removal of comrade Lovestone may ruin the Party. That is not true, comrades. More than that, it is not sincere. It would be a bad Party that could not get along without any given leader. The Communist Party of America is not as weak as certain comrades think. It is, in any case, many times stronger than it is made out to be. The Party is created by the working class and not by individual leaders. To declare the contrary would be absurd. And, what is more, comrade Lovestone after all is not such a great leader. He is, of course, a capable and talented comrade. But how have his capabilities been employed? In factional scandal-mongering, in factional intrigue, comrade Lovestone is indisputably an adroit and talented factional wire-puller. No one can deny him that. But factional leadership must not be confused with Party leadership. A Party leader is one thing, a factional leader is something quite different. Not every factional leader has the gift of being a Party leader. I doubt very much that comrade Lovestone can be a Party leader at this stage.

That is how matters stand, comrades.

And what is the solution, you will ask? In my opinion the solution is to accept the draft of the Commission, to reject the declaration of the American delegation and to lay on all members of the Communist Party of America the duty of unreservedly carrying out the decisions of the Presidium. Either the American comrades will unhesitatingly submit to the decisions of the ECCI and actively carry them into effect – and that will be an important step toward destroying factionalism, toward peace in the Party; or they will stick to their declaration and refuse to submit to the decisions of the ECCI – and that will mean no peace, but war against the Comintern, war within the ranks of the American Communist Party. We propose peace and unity. If the comrades of the American delegation adopt our proposals, well and good; if not, all the worse for them. The Comintern will take its due course under all circumstances. Of that you may be sure, dear comrades.

Finally, a word or two regarding the new processes of bolshevizing the sections of the Comintern which are proceeding at the present time.

In conversation with me the other day, comrade Lovestone declared that some phrase or other regarding a 'running sore' in the apparatus of the Comintern, was a slip of the tongue. He assured me that the phrase was a chance one and had no connection with his relations to the Comintern. I answered that if the phrase was indeed an accidental one, it was not worth paying any attention to, although the phrase itself was undoubtedly untrue and mistaken. However, some time later I acquainted myself with the report made by comrade Lovestone at the sixth Congress, where he again speaks of a 'running sore', but this time not in relation to the apparatus of the Comintern, but to world capitalism. Apparently, the phrase 'running sore' is not altogether a chance one with comrade Lovestone. 'Running sore' in relation to world capitalism implies, we must assume, the crisis of world capitalism, the process of its disintegration.

And what does comrade Lovestone mean by the 'running sore' in the apparatus of the Communist International? Apparently, the same crisis and demoralization of the Comintern apparatus. What else could that expression mean? What is it that makes Lovestone speak of a 'running sore' or of a crisis in the Comintern apparatus? Obviously the same thing that prompts the right-wingers in the ranks of the CPSU to speak of a crisis and of demoralization in the Communist International. Speaking of demoralization of the Comintern, the right-wingers usually refer to such facts as the expulsion of right-wingers from the German Communist Party, the debacle of the right-wingers in the Czecho-Slovakian Party, the isolation of the right-wingers in the French Communist Party, the fight for the isolation of the incorrigible factionalists in the American Communist Party, and so on and so forth.

Well, perhaps these facts really are symptoms of the grave illness of the Communist International, symptoms of its demoralization, symptoms of a 'running sore' in the Communist International? Of course not, comrades. Only philistines and Babbitts in the Party can think that. The fact of the matter is that this is a beneficent process of cleansing the sections of the Communist International of opportunist and wavering elements. The parties are being bolshevized and strengthened by ridding themselves of decay. That this is the meaning of the recent events in the German, Czecho-Slovakian, American, French, and other parties, is clear. To the philistines in the Party, all this appears to be a sign of the demoralization of the Comintern because they cannot see further than their noses. But revolutionary Marxians know that this is a beneficent process of the bolshevization of our brother parties without which the proletariat cannot be prepared for the imminent class conflicts.

There are many who think that nothing has changed in the international situation of late, that everything has remained as of old. This is not true,

comrades. The fact of the matter is that we have an accentuation of the class struggle in all capitalist countries, a growing revolutionary crisis in Europe, growing conditions of a new revolutionary upward swing. Yesterday this was signalled by a general strike in Lodz. Not so long ago we had a signal from Berlin. Tomorrow we shall get signals from France, England, Czecho-Slovakia, America, India, China. Soon the ground will be too hot for world capitalism.

The duty of the Communist Party is at once to begin preparatory work for the coming class struggles, to prepare the working class and the exploited masses for new revolutionary struggles. The fight against reformism, against Social Democracy, must be intensified. The struggle for the winning of the millions of the working masses to the side of Communism must be intensified. The fight must be intensified for the forging of real revolutionary Party cadres and for the selection of real revolutionary leaders of the Party, of individuals capable of entering the fight and bringing the proletariat with them, individuals who will not run before the face of the storm and will not fall into panic, but will sail into the face of the storm. But in order to carry out this task, it is necessary at once, without the loss of a single moment, for time does not wait, to set about cleaning the Communist parties of Right and conciliatory elements, who objectively represent the agency of Social Democracy within the ranks of the Communist Party. And we must set about this matter, not at the usual pace, but at an accelerated pace, for, I repeat, time does not wait, and we must not allow events to catch us unawares. A couple of years ago we might not have been so urgent about this matter, counting on the fact that the molecular process of the bolshevisation of the parties would gradually eliminate the Right and the wavering elements, all the [Heinrich] Brandlers and [August] Thalheimers, all and every factional wire-puller, etc., etc. We might not have been so urgent because there was no danger of being belated.

But matters stand differently now. To delay now means to be late, and to be late means to be caught unawares by the revolutionary crisis. Therefore, the cleansing process of the Communist parties now proceeding is a beneficent process, strengthening the Comintern and its sections. The philistines are afraid of this beneficent process, and in their fright talk nonsense regarding the disintegration of the Comintern, just because they are philistines. Revolutionaries, on the other hand, will always welcome this beneficent process, because it is at the same time an integral part of the great cause of preparing the working class for the approaching class struggles, which is now the main task of the Communist parties of the world.

The merit of the draft of the Commission consists in the fact, among others, that it assists the Communist Party of America in carrying this main task into effect.

7. Second Speech by Joseph Stalin in the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, 14 May 1929⁷

It seems to me, comrades, that certain American comrades fail to understand the position that has been created now that the draft of the Commission has been adopted by the Presidium. Apparently, comrades do not fully realize that to defend one's convictions when the decision had not yet been taken is one thing, and to submit to the will of the Comintern after the decision has been taken is another. One might, and one ought to have, criticised and fought against the draft of the Commission if the members of the delegation considered that it was wrong. But now that the draft of the Commission has become the decision of the Presidium, the American delegates should have the manhood to submit to the will of the collective, the will of the Comintern, and assume responsibility for carrying into effect the decision of the Comintern.

We ought to value the firmness and stubbornness displayed here by eight of the 10 American delegates in their fight against the draft of the Commission. But it is impossible to approve the fact that these eight comrades, after their views have suffered complete defeat, refuse to subordinate their will to the will of the higher collective, the will of the Presidium of the ECCI. True Bolshevik courage does not consist in placing one's individual will above the will of the collective, above the will of the Comintern. True courage consists in being strong enough to master and overcome oneself and subordinate one's will to the will of the collective, the will of the higher Party body. Without that there is no collective. Without that there is not, and cannot be, any collective leadership.

I think you will not deny the Russian Bolsheviks' courage, firmness and ability to defend their convictions. How did any group of Russian Bolsheviks usually act when they found themselves in a minority? Not wishing to break the iron discipline of the Party, the minority as a rule conformed to the will of the majority. There have been tens and hundreds of instances in the history of our Party when a section of Bolsheviks, convinced that the Central Committee of

7 First published in *Communist Party USA 1931*, pp. 36–9.

the Bolshevik Party had taken a wrong decision, nevertheless, after discussion, after hot dispute, after defending their conviction, would declare their complete readiness to conform to the decisions of the higher leading collective and carry them into effect. I might mention such an instance which took place in 1907 when a section of the Bolsheviks were in favor of boycotting the Duma, whereas the larger section of Bolsheviks were for a change in policy in favor of participating in the Duma, and the minority unreservedly submitted to the will of the majority. The Russian Bolsheviks would have ruined the cause of the Russian Revolution had they not known how to conform the will of individual comrades to the will of the majority, had they not known how to act collectively. That is how we Bolsheviks were trained, the Bolsheviks who overthrew the bourgeoisie, established Soviet power and who are now shaking the foundations of world imperialism. Ability to act collectively, readiness to conform the will of individual comrades to the will of the collective, that is what we call true Bolshevik manhood. For without that manhood, without the ability to overcome, if you like, one's self-esteem, and subordinate one's will to the will of the collective, without these qualities, there can be no collective, no collective leadership, no Communism. And that is true not only in respect to individual parties and their central committees; it is particularly true in respect to the Comintern and its leading organs, which unite all the parties of Communists throughout the world.

Comrades Gitlow and Lovestone announced here with aplomb that their conscience and convictions do not permit them to submit to the decisions of the Presidium and carry them into effect. The same was said by comrade [Ella] Bloor. What they said amounted to this: since they do not agree with the decision of the Presidium, they cannot submit to that decision and carry it into effect. But only anarchists and individualists can talk like that, not Bolsheviks, not Leninists, who are obliged to place the will of the collective above their individual will. They talk of their conscience. But the members of the Presidium of the ECCI also have their conscience and convictions. What is to be done if the conscience and convictions of the Presidium of the ECCI conflict with the conscience and convictions of individual members of the American delegation? What is to be done if the American delegation in the Presidium received only one vote for their declaration, the vote of comrade Gitlow, while the remaining members of the Presidium unanimously declared themselves against the declaration of the American delegation and in favor of the draft of the Commission? Members of the American delegation, do you think that the conscience and convictions of Comrade Gitlow are above the conscience and convictions of the overwhelming majority of the Presidium of the ECCI? Do you begin to understand that if each of us starts to act according

to his own will without reckoning with the will of the collective, we shall never come to any decision; we shall never have any collective will, nor any leadership?

Let us take any factory or plant. Let us assume that the majority of the workers of that factory show an inclination to go on strike, whereas the minority, on the plea of their convictions, declare against a strike. A war of opinions commences, meetings are held and in the end the vast majority in the factory decide to strike. What would you say of ten or twenty workers, representing a minority in the factory, who declared they would not submit to the decision of the majority of the workers, since they were not in agreement with that decision? What would you call them, dear comrades? You know that such workers are usually called strike-breakers. Is it not clear that strikes, demonstrations and other collective actions of the workers would be absolutely impossible if the minority did not subordinate itself to the majority? Is it not clear that we should never have had any decisions or any collective will, neither in the individual parties, nor in the Comintern, if individuals, and minorities in general, did not submit to the will of the majority, to the will of the higher collective?

That is how it works out, comrades of the American delegation.

Finally, a few words as to the fate of the American Communist Party in connection with the decision adopted by the Presidium of the ECCI. The comrades of the American delegation regard the matter too tragically. They declare that with the adoption of the draft of the Commission, the American Communist Party will either perish, or in any case, will totter on the brink of a precipice. That is not so, comrades. More than that, it is absolutely ludicrous. The American Communist Party lives and will continue to live, in spite of the prophecies of the comrades of the American delegation. What is more, the American Party, if it drives unprincipled factionalism out of its midst, will grow and flourish. The importance of the decision adopted by the Presidium consists in the very fact that it will make it easier for the American Communist Party to put an end to unprincipled factionalism, create unity in the Party and finally enter on the broad path of mass political work. No comrades, the American Communist Party will not perish. It will live and flourish to the dismay of the enemies of the working class. Only one small factional group will perish if it continues to be stubborn, if it does not submit to the will of the Comintern, if it continues to adhere to its errors. But the fate of one small faction must in no case be identified with the fate of the American Communist Party. Because one small factional group is liable to perish politically, it does not follow that the American Communist Party must perish. And if it is inevitable that this small factional group will perish, then let it perish, as long as the Communist Party will grow and develop. You look at the situation too pessimistically, dear comrades of the American delegation. My outlook is optimistic.

8. Party Split Telegram Sent to New York, 15 May 1929

(Version One)⁸

Draft decision means destruction party unless firm solid front maintained. Take no action any proposals by anybody or cabled Komintern instructions cabled draft letter instructing publish same, until delegation arrives. Situation astounding, outrages can't be understood until arrival. Possibility entire delegation being forcefully detained therefore unless you hear from us within 10 days that we are returning, start wide movements units and press for return complete Convention delegation inclusive Lovestone, Wolfe to hear report our side case.

Decision proposes publish American and world press document would completely destroy party and K1 in eyes American masses, calls leadership petty-bourgeois politicians, unprincipled dishonest misleaders, intrigues which cannot be tolerated any section K1, unmentions single party achievement such as Southwork, provides basis expelling on questions formal discipline thousand members entire majority, ignores EC [=??] during direct membership, attacks Convention. We support unreservedly will sixth Congress and Convention opletter [open letter] but new decision overthrow both creating general K1 crisis by disowning 6 Congress, will remove our secretariat its enlarging, reorganizing secretariat supplanting Polcom, leaving Foster gensecship [Executive Secretary] open but speeches lay basis Weinstone gensec, pushing Weinstone, Wicks for secretariats, strategy being cover support minority by boosting Weinstone, Wicks, Weiss who presented as true majority, attacks sharpening on Minor, Stachel, Ballam, Cabbage [Amter], and Gitlow. Desperate speculation on split our ranks. Entire delegation solid as one, also every American Moscow including Zimmerman, Trachtenberg, who just

⁸ Typescript housed by the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, Moscow, f. 515, op. 1, d. 1549, l. 31. Pseudonym-identifications by Tim Davenport.

arrived, except Shklar. We count on you all to show some splendid spirit. Only this can save party from destruction.

Carefully check up all units, all property, all connections, all mailing lists, TUEL, MOPR relief, etc., all sub lists, rack lists, removing some offices and unrelia- bles. Check all checking accounts, all organizations, seeing that authorised signers are exclusively reliable, appointing secretariat for relief and treasurer disauthorizing wage-signature. Instantly finish preparations sell buildings especially removing Weinstone trusteeship. Remove Many Reiss.

Absolutely unpostpone TUEL affair [Convention], aims only take TUEL away destroying splitting. No manuscript money forthcoming, support TUEL as best you can marrying her strictly appointed date. Pepper here we unsoft- ening, with him maintaining sham [=???] distinction. We think Harvey [=???] action extremely unwise. His appointment served show up crassly line pur- sued KI. Foster appointment became Harvey [=???] neither workers nor unfac- tionalist, Crouch, worker mass figure, unfactionalist.

Absolutely don't letter acknowledgement or cognisance this letter but guide thereby.

Version Two⁹

New cord [decision] will destroy store [party] and mansion [Comintern] in eyes of American masses, calls dukedon [leadership] misleaders, petty- bourgeois politicians, intriguers – want to publish this in American and world press. Our comrades to be removed [from the] Bruce [Secretariat], [and] Bruce [Secretariat] enlarged, Benton [Will Weinstone] and Adeline [Wicks] put on. Claim Weinwickweis [Will Weinstone, Harry Wicks, Weiss] represents Athletics [majority], attacks against Colonel [Robert Minor], Berthold [Jack Stachel], Samuel [John Ballam], Cabbage [Israel Amter], and needle Sascha [Sasha Zimmerman]. Delegation firm also all Americans [in] Mecca [Moscow] except Shklar. No action to be taken on mansion [Comintern] cord [decision] until delegation returns. Mansion [Comintern] may forcefully detain delega- tion. If in ten days no word received that delegation coming, campaign in units and press for return delegation including Sergeant [Lovestone] and Chester [Bert Wolfe]. Cardinal [Foster] as gensec [Executive Secretary] still open but speeches seem to lay basis for Benton [Weinstone] as gensec.

9 Typescript in Jay Lovestone Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Box 195, Folder 1. Pseudonym-identifications by Tim Davenport.

In order to have our comrades present their side. Editors to be notified not to feed [print] if receive cramps [cables] direct. All authorised signers of Vera [TUEL], Rose [ILD], Relief [MOPR], etc. to be sure are reliables. All [mailing] lists racks [records] out of offices. Sell all properties. End Benton [Weinstone] trusteeship; unauthorise Wag [Alfred Wagenknecht] as signer.

9. Decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USA on the Address of the Communist International, 18 May 1929¹⁰

1. The Central Committee accepts and endorses the Address to the American Party membership by the Executive Committee of the Communist International and undertakes to win the entire Party membership for the support of the Comintern Address.

2. The Central Committee pledges itself unconditionally to carry into effect the decisions contained in this Address.

3. The Central Committee pledges itself and its members to defend the Address of the Comintern before the membership against any ideological or other opposition to the Address.

4. The Central Committee calls upon the members of the delegation in Moscow to withdraw all opposition to the Address and to the decisions contained therein and to do all in their power to assist the Comintern and the Central Committee of the American Party to unify the Party in support of these decisions.

5. The Central Committee instructs the Secretariat to proceed immediately, in agreement with the Executive Committee of the Communist International, to take all measures necessary to put into application the decisions and to realize the objectives of the Comintern as expressed in the Address.

6. The Central Committee approves all decisions of the Secretariat of the same date, accepting and ordering immediate publication in the entire Party press of the Address of the ECCI to the American Party membership, and instructs the Secretariat to put these decisions into effect immediately.

¹⁰ *The Daily Worker*, 20 May 1929, p. 3.

10. The Significance of the Comintern Address¹¹

...

Proceedings of the American Commission

6. The American question was taken up immediately after the return of the Comintern delegation from the sixth Convention [of the American CP]. The comrade presented to the full meeting of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International a detailed and full report. Thereafter it was decided to set up a Commission on the American question. The Commission, as authoritative as the Comintern has ever appointed on the affairs of any Party in a similar situation, consisted of comrades Kuusinen (Chairman), Bell, Gusev, Kitarov (of the Young Communist International), Kolarov, Bela Kun, Losovsky, Manuilsky, Moireva, Molotov, Stalin, Ulbricht. The Commission discussed the American question for a month, and during all that month the whole attention of the Comintern was being devoted to the American Commission. No possibility to think that the American affairs were being rapidly and superficially dwelt with. On the contrary, every member of the American delegation made a statement, several members made several statements, and, in addition, questions were asked individually from most of the delegation by members of the Commission. Further, every member of the Commission made a statement at one point or another in the proceedings, and these statements, one can say, were as carefully considered and worked out (many of them written) as in any of the commissions of the Comintern. It was a thorough and fundamental examination of the American question and one which came at the end of six years (in certain matters, of 10 years) of consideration of the difficult situation of the American Party.

7. Towards the end of the Commission it became clear that the opinion of the members of the Commission was in favor of the organizational proposals by maintaining them almost intact, and at that the majority of the American Delegation prepared a statement. The statement was handed in on 9 May after

11 Unsigned lead-article from *The Communist* [New York], June 1929, pp. 291–302.

almost all the Commission had spoken and made quite clear what the line of the Address would be. This statement of 9 May indicated that the majority delegation was not prepared to accept the line that was being worked out by the Comintern, and some of the wording was in the nature of a veiled threat of the consequences, if the Comintern should proceed. When the Address was prepared and the text put before the Commission, it contained reference to the declaration of 9 May and of the danger of any party following that path. Then came the meeting of 12 May, when the Commission finally discussed the draft address and decided at the end of the meeting to adopt the draft and present it to the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. At this meeting, the representatives of the Party were asked to state their attitude. One should note that the Address had been presented by Comrade Kuusinen, Chairman of the Commission, in a speech of extraordinary clearness and vigour, at the end of which he said that the factionalism of six years, with various promises made and not carried out, made it necessary to ask the comrades of the American delegation if they would accept the decisions of the Comintern: – ‘Yes or No?’ The comrades of the previous minority, who had received most severe criticism by the Chairman, and comrade Weinstone, said they would accept. The other comrades said they would not make any statement until a day later. The matter was put in the clearest possible way by Stalin, but all the members of the majority delegation refused to give a definite answer.

The matter then came before the Presidium on 14 May. The draft Address was presented, and Comrade Gitlow, on behalf of the American delegation, read a prepared declaration. Speakers spoke indicating their attitude to the Address, which they all accepted, and then proceeded to deal with the declaration. The declaration contained one operative clause, determining the whole contents, which stated that they were ‘unable to accept this new draft letter, to assume responsibility before the Party membership for the execution of this letter, to endorse the inevitable irreparable damage that the line of this new draft is bound to bring to our Party’.

8. Speaker after speaker, from every party of the Comintern present at that Presidium meeting, spoke on the question and argued with the representatives of the majority on this matter: in fact, there was not a single member of the Presidium present who did not speak. At the end of the meeting, the Address was put to the Presidium and carried by all the members of the Presidium against one vote, that of comrade Gitlow. The American delegation was then requested to give their opinion. Those who voted for the Address were: comrades Weinstone, Foster, and Bittelman; and against it: all comrades of the majority of the delegation. Comrade Stalin then took the floor

again and pointed out that up to that point it had been possible to argue, but now the decision had definitely been taken, the Address had been adopted: what was the attitude of the American delegation? As to the responsibility of every Communist in matters of this kind, he took a very simple and oft-used illustration of what happens in strikes when once a decision has been made to strike, and what would be the position of those who refused to carry out that decision. Comrades of the majority were asked, one by one, whether they would accept the decision. Comrades Noral and Bedacht gave their answer, that while they had up to the last moment been against it, they were, as disciplined Communists, ready to accept and also to carry it out, execute it and to fight for it. The other members of the majority of the American delegation, with the exception of Comrade Welsh, who stated that he would not fight the Comintern but said he could not agree with it entirely – said they would not accept. Comrade Gitlow said further that he would actively oppose carrying out all the decisions in America. Comrade Lovestone did not say so in so many words, but the whole of his speech made it clear that he took the same line as comrade Gitlow. Then the matter was left to the Polsecretariat to take the necessary organizational steps in view of the declaration. The meeting closed with declarations by a series of Lenin students [students of the Lenin School], who up to that moment had been supporting the majority, that they would accept and carry out the decision.

• • •

The Anti-Comintern Opposition

18. It is quite clear that this carrying through of the line will not be accomplished without struggle. There is already a new opposition in the Party. It is not surprising, perhaps, that this new opposition up to now has been directed by those who were previously leaders of the Party, i.e., by comrades Lovestone and Gitlow . . .

19. What are the characteristics of the new opposition? First, it is a factional opposition, but the faction this time is one against the Communist International; secondly, it is a Right opposition; and, thirdly, it seems to link up with the whole of the international Right danger. In Moscow during the proceedings, a declaration was made to the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, then meeting, by Comrade Gitlow, in which he made unmistakably clear that objectively he was supporting the international Rights in their attacks on the leadership of the Communist

International and Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The same applies to the declarations of 9 May and 14 May. It is not any accident that they do this. Because whoever in the past has begun to struggle against the decisions of the Communist International, stands upon a slippery slope, and down and down they go rolling into the swamp. They use the same arguments, and sooner or later they come into line with the bourgeoisie in its attack. This seems almost to be a law, to judge from the ten-year history of the Comintern, the law of renegades. Every opposition against the Comintern, from Paul Levi to Trotsky, however it began, has gone rolling down into the morass of the bourgeoisie.

20. To be effective, this struggle that must be carried out against such opposition must be a sharp one. It is necessary for the Party to fight hard for the line of the Comintern. This must be our tactical line against comrades Lovestone and Gitlow. Because the harder we fight against any opposition to the line of the Comintern, the easier will it be for the whole Party membership to understand the situation. More than that. It is not good to hide from the Party a situation like his. Too much has been hidden in the past. It is necessary to tell the Party everything very strongly, clearly and simply. The struggle waged, the blows put in, the harder and sharper we fight for the Communist International, the more chance is there that the comrades who have been hesitating will begin to realize the road they are beginning to take, and whither it will lead them.



11. Material for the Enlightenment of the Party Membership on the CI Address to our Party¹²

On 9 June [1929] the Secretariat of the Central Committee received the following cabled statement by Lovestone from Moscow:

Moscow, USSR, 9 June 1929.

While still maintaining my disagreement with the 'Open Letter' [1 February 1929] and its instructions, and my conviction that they will not prove helpful to the Party, I hereby condemn all resistance to Comintern decisions and call upon the Party membership to take no steps to resist or hinder the execution of the decisions of the ECCI. In this connection I therefore withdraw my previous declaration of non-submission in the Presidium as incorrect and impermissible in the Comintern and offer this statement of my submission to the decisions of the ECCI as supplanting my previous declaration.

I strongly urge all comrades to drop factionalism and to dissolve the groups.

With communist greetings,
Jay Lovestone

The Secretariat of the Central Committee, in acting upon this cable, decided to inform the Comintern that it considered the statement of Lovestone inadequate. The Secretariat also decided not to publish this cable.

While pretending to condemn his declaration of 14 May, he in reality brought again before the American Party members his platform of opposition to the CI decision and his characterization of that decision as inimical to the interests of our Party. The Secretariat of our Party is of the opinion that it was Lovestone's duty to give political substance to his repudiation of his declaration of 14 May

¹² *Daily Worker*, 27 June 1929, p. 4.

and to the splitting cable of 15 May by a complete abandonment of all reservations to the CI decisions.

...

The Political Committee in its meeting of 25 June had before it a declaration of Comrade Bertram D. Wolfe as follows:

New York, 23 June 1929.

Secretariat, Communist Party, United States of America

Dear comrades,

I have your letter of 21 June giving me forty-eight hours to make a written statement of my position on the latest Comintern decisions. At the same time you instruct me what my statement 'must' declare.

My convictions on the questions involved prevent me from making the declaration you dictate.

For example, I cannot honestly declare 'that I recognise the complete correctness of the Comintern Address and the related Comintern decisions on the American question' since I regard that Address and the accompanying decisions as *incorrect and injurious* to the American section of the Comintern and the Comintern as a whole. I submit to the decisions referred to not because I agree with them but in spite of my disagreement, as a matter of discipline and loyalty to the Comintern.

You also instruct me that I must 'denounce and emphatically condemn the anti-Comintern conduct' of the delegation from our sixth Convention to the Comintern. I emphatically do not regard the conduct of our delegation as anti-Comintern, but on the contrary, am convinced that it did its best to defend and urge what it thought and what our convention thought was in line with the best interests of the Comintern.

To sum up, my position is one of disagreement with the recent Address and related decisions and submission as a matter of discipline and loyalty.

With communist greetings,

Bertram D. Wolfe

The Secretariat and Political Bureau regard the statement of comrade Wolfe inadequate particularly in his refusal to condemn his actions in the Presidium

session of 14 May. The Secretariat also asked comrade Wolfe for a statement of attitude on the splitting cable of Lovestone on 15 May as well as upon his attitude toward the violation of discipline on the part of Lovestone in returning to the United States.

Comrade Wolfe, in his answer to the questions put to him, clearly showed his unwillingness to condemn Lovestone's flagrant violation of CI discipline or to condemn the open steps taken in the cable of 15 May to split our Party. In addition to this, comrade Wolfe made it clear that he could not conscientiously defend the CI line and make himself an agent of the Central Committee and of the Political Bureau in the carrying through of the major campaign of the Party at the present moment: the enlightenment campaign on the CI Address. The Political Committee came to the conclusion that it cannot permit the establishment of the institution of passive members of the Polbureau, members who declare either their unwillingness or their incapacity to carry out the Party line as formulated in the Address of the CI. Members of leading Party committees, who cannot be active in leading the Party membership in the campaigns of the Party, have no place on the leading committees of the Party.

At the Political Bureau, comrade Wolfe continued to take issue with the basic political line of the CI.

The Political Committee therefore decided unanimously, against the vote of Wolfe, to suspend comrade Wolfe from membership of the Political Committee of the Party.

12. Statement of the Central Committee on the Expulsion of Jay Lovestone from the Communist Party of United States of America¹³

The struggle against the line and decisions of the Communist International in our Party has now reached its climax. The Party is face-to-face with an organized attempt at a split.

The Political Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International has informed the Central Committee that 'comrade Lovestone left on 11 June 1929 for the US despite the decision of the Political Secretariat of the ECCI'. By this action Lovestone has defied the decisions of the ECCI and has violated the discipline of the Comintern, despite previous warning, in the most flagrant manner.

It is now the duty of the Central Committee to take the necessary measures against the breach of discipline of Lovestone and to point out to the Party the political meaning of Lovestone's conduct. The open defiance by Lovestone of the decisions of the Communist International is only the last link in the long chain of acts of struggle from within the CI against the Comintern and its policies. By this action Lovestone begins the open struggle against the Communist International from without, and is undertaking a definite step of open organization for the splitting of the Party . . .

After the sixth Congress, political divergence with the line of the Communist International passed over into organizational steps against the CI. When the attempts to prevent the recall of Pepper from work in the United States could no longer succeed, Lovestone and Pepper entered into a conspiracy to defy the decisions of the Comintern and to deceive not only the Central Committee of our Party, but the entire Party and the CI. This action in the Pepper case had nothing in common with Communist principledness, but was an act of deception, a rotten maneuver clearly showing the imprints of petty-bourgeois politicianism.

13 *Daily Worker*, June 27 1929, p. 4.

The political struggle of Lovestone and Pepper against the CI reached a further stage in the mobilization of the sixth Convention of our Party against the 'Open Letter' and the organizational proposals of the Comintern. The representatives of the CI were treated as ambassadors of an enemy who was to be fought, deceived and outwitted. The mobilization of the Convention against the CI decision was a mobilization against the CI itself. The Communist integrity of the delegates to the convention, composed of the best proletarians of our Party, would never have permitted open and obvious propaganda against the Comintern. The mobilization therefore took the form of deception of the delegates to the Convention, and of concealed maneuvers against the CI. Lovestone did not dare to suggest to the Convention delegates that the resistance to the CI decision should go farther than to secure a reconsideration by the CI of the disputed questions. The 'running sore' slogan supplied the 'political' excuse of non-acceptance of the decisions.

After arrival in Moscow, however, the delegation, under the instigation of Lovestone, adopted a course which from the very beginning transgressed the rights and duties of representatives of a loyal section of the Communist International. The delegation of the American Party in Moscow fought in a spirit which placed them in an obvious attitude of opposition to the Comintern. The ultimate character of the 10 demands submitted by the delegation to the American Commission on 10 April, the declarations of 9 May and 14 May appear as undeniable witnesses to this effect. And the statement of comrade Gitlow to the plenary session of the Central Committee of the CPSU repeated the slanderous attacks of the Right elements of the International upon our brother Party of the Soviet Union. The disgraceful defiance of the CI in the session of the Presidium of 14 May was not merely a logical outcome of the antagonistic line adopted by Lovestone against the CI, but was part of a consciously calculated plan of campaign of Lovestone against the Communist International.

Lovestone's course since he has chosen the path of the international right wing shows that he is not only in contradiction with the line of the Communist International, but with that of the American Party as well. The American Party has always regarded itself as a staunch defender of the line of the Communist International and readily and promptly gave its support to the struggle against Right elements and against all deviations within the Communist International...

Lovestone's cablegram of 15 May sent from Moscow to former group supporters glaringly reveals the intention of Lovestone in the action which he has now taken.

'Start wide movements in units and press for return of complete delegation', states this cable, thus suggesting public political propaganda against the Soviet Union practically under the slogan of 'Release the Political Prisoners'.

'Take no action on any . . . CI instructions', commands this remarkable document, thus demanding the defiance of the Comintern.

'Carefully check up all units, all property, all connections, all mailing lists of auxiliaries, all sub lists, district lists, removing some offices and unreliaables. Check all checking accounts, all organizations, seeing that authorised signers are exclusively reliables, appointing secretariat for auxiliaries and treasury, dis-authorise present signatory. Instantly finish preparations sell buildings, especially eliminate W [Weinstone] trusteeship. Remove Many Reiss'. These are undeniable definite steps to take our American Party out of the Communist International. These are measures that could be undertaken only by an enemy of the Comintern to split the Party.

This effort of Lovestone to split the Party did not succeed. The American Party has learned enough of its own history and out of the history of the Comintern to place the authority and revolutionary integrity of the Communist International above all. That is why, in spite of Lovestone's expectations and instructions, our Party accepted unhesitatingly the CI Decision and exposed and isolated Lovestone. Lovestone, who had thus unhesitatingly cut himself loose from the CI by open declaration of war against it on 14 May, found that by this act he had also cut himself loose from our Party. It was a recognition of this fact that he was isolated and not a repentance or a change of mind that led him to the declaration of 9 June . . . This cable was sent through factional connections in the United States and transmitted to the Central Committee. It found immediate factional circulation in the Party. This cable was an attempt to sneak back into the confidence of the Party by means of a common deception. At the same time, through the cable, Lovestone aimed to keep before the eyes of the Party his platform of struggle against the CI. While declaring formal submission to CI authority, this authority was openly challenged and its political judgment condemned as destructive to the Party. The Central Committee could not permit the use of the channels of the Party or the use of its press for this insidious purpose of Lovestone, and correctly evaluated the declaration of Lovestone not as one of submission to the CI, but as a further maneuver against the CI. Events have proven the correctness of the stand of the Central Committee.

Immediately upon his return, Lovestone failed to report his presence to the Central Committee but instead has been holding meetings and conferences with Party members, in which he continued his mobilization against the CI. Rumours of new expulsions by the CI were put into circulation by him,

thus continuing his propaganda against the 'running sore', 'hooliganism', etc. Lovestone, though urgently invited to appear, finally refused to come and answer for his defiance of the Comintern.

In his defiance of CI decisions, his return to America and by his conduct since his return, Lovestone has taken the logical step resulting from his irreconcilable political differences with the line of the CI. It is now the duty of the Central Committee and the Party to draw the logical conclusion from Lovestone's act of war. In defense of the unity of the Party and in expression of the overwhelming will of the membership of the Party, the Central Committee answers the challenge of Lovestone's split with expulsion from the Communist Party of the USA. In expelling Lovestone, who has become a renegade to the cause of Communism, the Central Committee and the entire Party will mercilessly fight to destroy any of his attempts and maneuvers to split the Party. The proletarian membership of our Party will rally behind the Central Committee and will defeat the splitters and renegades...

The Central Committee calls upon the Party members to give a most decisive answer to the international right wing and to its American lieutenant, Lovestone.

The last step of Lovestone, his efforts to split the Party, turns any concealed opposition to the CI Decision into an open agency against the CI. The Party must ruthlessly expose the concealed opposition which will seek to carry on the policies and tactics of Lovestone inside the Party.

The unity of our World Party, the unity of the American section, the Bolshevik integrity of our Party is the concern of every Party member. Every Party member will rally to the defense of the Party.

Fight against the contamination of the Party by petty-bourgeois opportunism.

Defeat the international Right and its American lieutenants.

Combat unprincipled factionalism as the main obstacle to bolshevization...

Central Committee, Communist Party of America

13. Appeal to the 10th Plenum of the ECCI on the Last Comintern Address and the Expulsions and Removals Now Taking Place in the Party, 10 July 1929¹⁴

...

The Struggle against the Right Danger

We categorically reject the characterization of our Party and its leadership contained in the Address as absolutely without political foundation. We stand today, as in the past, for a Leninist policy of self-criticism to aid the Party to profit by a correction of its mistakes. But what is demanded of us by the Address is self-abuse and Party destruction. We do not consider advertizing of oneself as petty-bourgeois politicians, rotten diplomats, unprincipled intriguers, right-wingers, exceptionalists and splitters as having anything in common with Bolshevik self-criticism. We do not consider mastery of the art of confessional self-abuse and spitting in one's face a prerequisite for Communist leadership.

The charge is made that the previous Party leadership was against the line of the ninth Plenum of the Communist International. The falsity of this charge is proved by the fact that our thesis, the thesis of the previous leadership, unanimously adopted by our February 1928 Plenum, was endorsed by the Communist International in its letter of 18 April 1928 – *subsequent to the ninth Plenum*.

The statement of the Political Committee on the expulsion of comrade Lovestone accepts bodily the position of the document presented by Cannon, Bittelman and Foster to the sixth World Congress of the Communist International, ie the Trotskyist counterrevolutionary document entitled

¹⁴ First published as a thirty-eight page mimeographed document. Reprinted as part of a four-page broadsheet entitled 'Appeal to the Comintern', July 1929.

'The Right Danger in the American Party', which was categorically rejected by the sixth World Congress. This is manifested in the estimate of American Imperialism and in the estimate of the Party and its previous leadership.

The sixth Congress was chiefly characterised by its fight against the Right danger. It was this Congress which categorically rejected the accusation against the then Party leadership as a right-wing leadership and instead declared that *the policies of the Party led to a situation where our Party became the 'stalwart leader of fierce class battles'.*

In the declaration on Lovestone's expulsion, the new Political Committee has adopted the line of the reservations of Johnstone, Bittelman, Gomez, Siskind etc., to the thesis of the sixth World Congress, and made these reservations the basis of this platform.

The delegation of the American Party made a genuine contribution to the sixth World Congress, in spite of the reservations of Johnstone and his associates to the decision of the Congress and the vote of Gomez for the Social-Democratic theory of decolonization. Does comrade Weinstone, in denouncing our Party's role at the Congress, now repudiate his contribution to the program commission, where he turned in the material prepared for him by comrade Pepper? Does he now repudiate his sixth World Congress speech prepared for him by comrade Lovestone – against the document, 'The Right Danger in the American Party', which he now makes his own platform? Or does Wicks now condemn and repudiate himself for having exposed at the sixth World Congress that Foster, Bittelman, and Cannon drew inspiration for their criticism of the then Party leadership from Trotsky's 'Appeal' to the World Congress? ...

At a special secret session of the Seniorens Convent (leading Steering Committee) of the sixth World Congress of the Communist International, under the chairmanship of comrade Bukharin, comrade Stalin presented the following declaration unanimously adopted by the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on 30 June 1928: 'The undersigned members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union declare before the Committee of Elders (Seniorens Convent) of the Congress that they most emphatically protest against the circulation of rumours that there are dissensions among the members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.'

This declaration emphasised that there was no Right danger or right-wingers or even differences in the Russian Political Bureau.

Are we to be condemned now for then believing in this declaration? We presumed that Comrades Stalin, Molotov, Kuusinen, Manuilsky and Kun also then believed in this declaration together with us. Perhaps it is because of this

defense of the line of the sixth Congress and our belief in the above declaration that we are now being persecuted and expelled. *It is obvious that it is not we who are departing from the line of the sixth Congress but it is those who are now expelling and persecuting us who are deserting and betraying the line of the sixth Congress...*

We Repudiate Party-Splitting Charges

We repudiate most emphatically the charge that we are trying to split the Party. *We stand unreservedly for the unity of the Party.* We are among the founders and builders of the Party and fought at all times to strengthen and preserve its unity.

It is under the cover of this ranting about Party splitting that *the present 'leadership' is actually splitting and wrecking the Party.*

Much is being said and written by [Max] Bedacht and [Jack] Stachel about the cable dated Berlin, 15 May. Comrade Bedacht has lied to the membership and the Communist International about the cable. He says he had nothing to do with it. He claims he broke with the delegation on 14 May and this cable was sent on 15 May. Here are the facts: this cable was written in Moscow by comrade Bedacht in consultation with comrades Gitlow, Lovestone and Wolfe on Sunday 12 May, immediately after the last full meeting of the American Commission. It was forwarded from Moscow on 13 May and cabled from Berlin to New York on 15 May.

First of all: we admit the serious error in sending this cable. Secondly, it was not a cable aiming to split the Party, but one aiming to hold the Party against the degenerate, bankrupt, opportunist Fosterite minority, if it attempted to seize the Party apparatus on the basis of the Communist International 'Address'. *Stachel and Minor fully agreed with this policy before the delegation left.* In fact, Stachel and Minor prepared a list of names of comrades to whom all Party property could be transferred in case the Communist International would decide, despite the appeal of the delegation to Moscow and the decisive will of the membership as represented in the Convention, to turn the Party over to the minority. It must be emphasised that every leading comrade of the majority and every steadfast majority delegate to the sixth National Convention [4–10 March, 1929], entertained then the most vigorous conviction that *to turn the Party over to the minority would spell the ruin of the American section of the Comintern.* It is for this reason and on the basis of this policy that Stachel, even before the delegation left for Moscow, arranged with one of the attorneys handling the Party's legal matters to make it impossible for [Will]

Weinstone to take away through legal channels, the Workers Center from the Party in New York.

Minor and Stachel must explain to the Communist International why they hid this cable from the Party and the Communist International until 4 June – almost three weeks. When we sent the cable on 15 May we aimed at preserving and not splitting the Party. But if Stachel, Minor, [John] Ballam, [Henry] Puro, [Louis] Engdahl, [M.J.] Olgin, [Jacob] Mindel were immediately convinced that it was a Party-splitting cable, why did they keep it a secret for so long?

We must especially ask comrade Bedacht why he concealed this cable *and his connection with it* and why he continues to do so. Who wrote this cable? It was comrade Bedacht. Who knew its exact contents? It was only comrades Bedacht, Gitlow, Lovestone and Wolfe. Who agreed to send definite instructions to preserve the Party from seizure by the minority? It was the entire delegation. Why are Bedacht, Stachel, Minor & Co. so interested in trying to make it appear that this cable was the work only of comrade Lovestone and to hide their own responsibility in this matter? Why does not especially comrade Bedacht come forward to be Communist and honest enough to tell *his entire leading role* in this mistake, as we have done regarding ourselves here? And why does not Stachel tell the Party and the Communist International how it is that this cable is made public only now when the New York national majority top caucus decided to burn it and he Stachel guaranteed its being burned?

Such practices and methods as resorted to by Stachel, Bedacht and Minor are the crassest manifestations of ‘rotten petty-bourgeois diplomacy’, unprincipledness and unscrupulous careerism that have ever been manifested in our Party or in any other section of the Communist International. This explains why these careerists are mistrusted by the Party membership and why it is that the outstanding leaders of the Communist International – despite superficial appearances – deeply distrust these comrades who are so ready to believe and say and do anything at all, regardless of conviction or principle, for the mere sake of holding on to their Party jobs.

The Work of the Delegation

The Delegation sent by the sixth National Convention of our Party to the Communist International was the most authoritative and representative one ever sent by our Party to the Communist International. In it there was to be found the entire first-line of leadership of the Party, the most tried and experienced proletarian comrades of the principal industrial districts of the Party. The delegation, regardless of any mistakes it may have made, was and is

animated solely by the best interests of the Communist International and our Party.

We fought energetically for the Communist International's and the Party's interests. But the delegation was up against a very difficult situation. It was faced with a decision made in the Communist International – for the first time in its history – that ‘individual conversations between members of the Commission and the delegates should be avoided’.

In utter violation of the line of the sixth World Congress of the Communist International, of the decision of the September 7 1928 session of the Communist International Political Secretariat, of the Communist International's ‘Open Letter’ to our Party dated 21 November 1928, of the Comintern's ‘Open Letter’ to our sixth National Convention and even long before the delegation had a chance really to present its viewpoint as to what occurred at and after the Convention, there was prepared, in agreement with comrades Stalin and Molotov, a resolution for the last German Party Convention in which *the entire American Party majority was already branded as opportunists early in April 1929*. We quote from this resolution:

The opportunists of the Communist Party of Germany played a role of an outpost of the international opportunist line in the ranks of the Communist International which, under the leadership of the Russian Rights (Bukharin group), are trying to deflect and to falsify Bolshevik policies. Comrade Bukharin already showed at the sixth World Congress of the Communist International his insufficient firmness, his uncertainty and wavering on the questions of the Third Period, of relative stabilization, on the struggle against the ‘left’ Social Democracy, the necessity for Bolshevik discipline and the struggle against the conciliators. While comrade Bukharin was publicly declaring his agreement with the decisions of the sixth World Congress, he was trying in reality to form a factional bloc with Kamenev against the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Rights and conciliators in Germany are ideologically and politically connected with all opportunist groupings in the Communist Parties of Italy (Serra), France, England, America (Lovestone, Pepper), Czecho-Slovakia (Hais, Jilek), Switzerland (Humbert-Droz), Austria (Schlamm), and others.

Thus the line of the Address was already established before the delegation could make its case and regardless of the case it would make.

When the above paragraph came to the knowledge of the delegation, there was deep disgust in our ranks. *Comrade Bedacht proposed that we demand our*

passports. The Steering Committee of the delegation flatly rejected this proposal of comrade Bedacht.

Then came the statement of 9 May written by comrade Bedacht and adopted by the delegation. It was the sharpest statement the delegation issued in Moscow. The extent to which comrade Bedacht went further than the rest of the delegation in indignation and militancy against the line of the decision is evidenced in the 'Dear Mama letters' – a series of reports written by him in German to the Chicago comrades, through his wife . . .

A Panicky, Unprincipled Clique in Action

The comrades will recall how the previous CEC gave even the counter-revolutionary Trotskyist Cannonites every opportunity to present their case and how the Party press even printed their statement to the membership before they were expelled, and here, in the case of comrade Lovestone, a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, charged with a technical, formal violation of discipline, the Stachels, Minors, Bedachts, etc., blindly and madly rushed into expulsion with utter disregard and flagrant violation of every guarantee of the Comintern and Party statutes accorded to every Communist. For every Communist it is elementary that Leninist methods require that ideological campaigns are the Bolshevik methods of popularizing decisions and that organizational measures should be resorted to reluctantly and only as a last step. But this panicky puppet leadership is incapable of an ideological campaign and willingly and frivolously sets out to wreck the Party with organizational measures – removals and expulsions – in place of an ideological campaign.

There is method in this madness! Stachel, Bedacht and co. hope in this fashion to expose to the CI their super-loyalty with the aim of being allowed to 'save the majority for the majority', to 'save their Party posts', to 'hold onto the Party apparatus'. It is on this basis that there was recently propounded by comrades Stachel and Minor in a Stachel-Bedacht caucus the novel but dangerous anti-Leninist doctrine of 'What is the use of talking about honesty amongst ourselves?' It is on record in the stenogram of the Political Committee that Minor declared: 'Honesty is a foreign term imported from an enemy-class. It belongs in the columns of *The Nation* and *The New Republic*'.

We call upon the Comintern to help the membership sweep out this rubbish blocking the forward march of our Party . . .

We believe that there have been some serious errors committed by the Comintern in its treatment of our Party. If every party of the Comintern is to be

an organic part of the Comintern, then the parties should be treated as *parties* and not as a collection of groups and factions – as the American Party has been treated. Especially since the sixth World Congress, the Petrovskys, Losovskys and Mingulins have been given too much of a free hand in maneuvering and manipulating in the pettiest phases of the inner affairs of our Party. For details, we refer the comrades to the documentary material we presented to the last American Commission. This gave rise to a situation where the American Party was ‘suspended on cables’. We could not handle even the smallest organizational or technical matters without fear that some member of the international caucus (of which Foster and Bittelman were an organic part and of which the ‘corridor caucus’ was an international expression) in the Comintern apparatus would not overrule us.

As a result of this system, Party democracy, an essential part of Leninism, has been thrown on the scrap heap. The overruling of our last Party Convention – without any political basis whatsoever and in utter violation of the line of the sixth World Congress – a convention speaking for over ninety percent of the Party and its best and most tried proletarian ranks, was only the logical, inevitable outcome of not treating our Party as an *organic* section of the Comintern, *as a Party* . . .

The 10th Plenum should overrule the Address to our Party and put an end to the paralysing, destructive policy of terror, suspensions, removals and expulsions and the raising of unprincipledness into a system which prevails in our Party today. Thus only will the unity and the growth of the American section of the Comintern be hastened and assured.

Yours for the Comintern!

Yours for the Communist Party of the United States of America!

With communist greetings,

Benjamin Gitlow
 Jay Lovestone
 William Miller
 Tom Myerscough
 Edward Welsh *
 W.J. White
 Bertram D. Wolfe

*Comrade Welsh associates himself with this Appeal to the Comintern except for certain references to facts and events previous to his entry into the Party.

P.S. Comrade Alex Noral is still in Moscow. His viewpoint was last expressed in a statement signed by him on 24 May 1929:

While still maintaining our disagreement with the 'Open Letter' and its organizational instructions, and our conviction that they will not prove helpful to our Party, we delegates to the CI, elected by the sixth National Convention of our Party, hereby categorically repudiate all charges of resistance to the Comintern decisions, and call upon the Party membership to take no steps to resist or hinder the execution of the decisions of the ECCI. We pledge ourselves to this effect.

P.S. Comrades Otto Huiswood and Ella Reeve Bloor also signed the statement of 24 May 1929, quoted above.

July 10, 1929.

14. Statement of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USA on the Appeal of Jay Lovestone and Others to the Communist International¹⁵

The Appeal of Jay Lovestone and others to the 10th Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, although ostensibly cast in the form of an Appeal, is actually written with another end in view, namely, under the guise of an appeal to initiate a widespread factional campaign throughout the Communist Party of the United States of America against the line of the Comintern as carried out by the Party. The aim – clearly shown by its printing in numerous copies – is to demoralise the Party by injecting into it fresh doses of factional poison. The purpose is to develop the platform of factional opposition to the Communist International, already formulated in the Declaration of 14 May and now carefully reproduced at the beginning of this so-called Appeal. In one sense only the document is an appeal – not an appeal to the Communist International but an appeal to the remnants of debased factional instincts, which in the struggle of six years had become ingrained in certain elements of the Party. Characteristic of the factional line is its cowardly evasiveness, the attempt to hide its political platform and to shift away from any clear statement of basic political issues...

Amid a cloud of falsifications, distortions, suppressions of vital facts, factional calumnies, etc., etc., of which the 'Appeal' mainly consists, there appears the structure of a political platform, which, though factional and from a Marxist point of view illiterate, is nevertheless a specifically Lovestoneite opportunist platform.

The political line of Lovestone, as revealed in this Appeal, should be clearly analysed and understood.

On question after question of deep political importance, especially for the Communist Party of the United States of America, the attitude of Lovestone is revealed to be in basic contradiction to the line of the sixth World Congress.

15 *Daily Worker*, 23 July 1929, p. 4, and 25 July 1929, p. 4.

The political line of Jay Lovestone is revealed first in an opportunist appreciation of the present position of American imperialism. Consequently it leads to an opportunist distortion of the revolutionary perspectives of the American working class and of the tasks of the Communist Party of the United States of America...

The Opportunist Theory of Exceptionalism

This theory of exceptionalism – which keeps recurring in explicit or implicit form in all of Lovestone's writings (not only in the theses, where the questions of American imperialism are put separately from questions of world capitalism, but in numerous characterizations, such as Lovestone's 'Victorian Age' of American imperialism) – is based on the historical fact that in the past American capitalism developed mainly on the basis of its internal market, just as at the present day the socialist society of the USSR is developing mainly on its immense internal market. This period of American capitalism is now passed away with the march of the imperialist epoch, but since social consciousness ever lags behind social conditions, there can still flourish this theory based on a situation which no longer exists.

Secondly, the theory of exceptionalism is derived from the direct propaganda of the bourgeoisie and the reformists, of the vulgar economists already mentioned above.

Thirdly, the theory of exceptionalism is based on so-called American 'prosperity', which is also an expression of the new policy of the American bourgeoisie. What is this policy? The American bourgeoisie, in view of the approaching restriction of the internal market, seeks to inflate artificially the consumption of the masses. But this artificial enlargement of the market (especially instalment-buying) swells the market beyond its true capacity. The distribution of goods becomes greater than the real buying capacity, and is, therefore, neither general nor lasting, but must be only partial and temporary. Whosoever does not understand this and is impressed by this so-called 'prosperity' falls straightaway into the opportunist theory of exceptionalism.

The social roots of this theory indeed may be found not only in the influence of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie upon the proletariat, but also amid the petty-bourgeois immigrant population, who are readily impressed with the technical equipment and superficial appearance of American capitalism. It cannot strike any deep root in the factory proletariat of America who feel the increased drive, the intensive exploitation, and who see clearly the contradictions of capitalism in the United States of America and the approaching crisis...

The Leninist Theory of Uneven Development

Lovestone attempts to justify his exceptionalism with Lenin's theory of the uneven development of capitalism. To make this Leninist theory serve his purpose he distorts it by implying that it proves that capitalism can very well be fundamentally healthy in one part of the world and fundamentally unhealthy in another. But Lenin's theory of uneven development implies nothing of the sort, but rather emphasises the co-relation and interdependence of the development of capitalism of the different countries. World capitalism as a whole is in the crisis of the Third Period. The character of this crisis is not modified for any section of world capitalism because of the uneven development of capitalism. The very uneven development itself subjects the 'strong' sections of world capitalism to the ravages of capitalism's constitutional disease, its irreconcilable inherent contradictions. Anyone who denies this must explain why the capitalism of Great Britain, in the act of defending its world hegemony against its enemy, the capitalism of Germany, lost it to its ally, the capitalism of the United States. In face of the fact that the capitalism of Great Britain became a 'victim' of the crisis of world capitalism just because of its 'strength' and dominating position in the world, Lovestone cannot convince anyone that the strength and dominating position of American capitalism will exempt it from the crisis. This is not Leninism; it is social-democratic opportunism, pure and simple. . . .

The CI demands of him that he admit and condemn the deception he practiced on the CI and the Party on the matter of Pepper. Lovestone answers this demand with a denunciation of other comrades who are carrying out the decisions of the Comintern. All comrades of the Polburo who had knowledge of Pepper's presence in America during the period when he, supported by Lovestone, claimed to have been in Mexico, have submitted long ago their statements of the facts to the International Control Commission, the only body that is acting on this question. Lovestone must understand that he is not called upon now to inform upon others but to own up for himself.

Lovestone is trying to play a similar trick with the factional cable of 15 May. First he attempts to disown it, and then, doubtful of the success of his maneuver, he denies its splitting character. But the cable speaks such a clear language that no effort will succeed in explaining away its purpose. It is an act leading directly to a split to refuse to publish Comintern decisions. It is a direct splitting act to instruct the caucus to dispose of the Party's property. It is a direct splitting act to instruct a caucus to remove, without cause and without any official action, Party functionaries for the sole purpose of getting Party funds into the possession of the caucus. What the Party had a right to demand of

Lovestone was that he should condemn this cable as an act of splitting, and also that he should immediately discontinue all actions in line with this cable.

Lovestone raves about his right to return to America to set right his private affairs. He keeps quiet, first, about the fact that he had ample opportunity to set in order his private affairs before he left for Moscow; secondly, he hides the fact that the 'private' affairs he attended to immediately upon his return were the holding of caucuses and the organization of a split movement against the Party. This movement has now crystallised into setting up a directing body for the Lovestoneites' abortive grouping. This directing body is that section of the majority of the delegation to Moscow which still defies the Comintern. Lovestone, in his appeal, even tries to give a legal status to this body. He says: 'There are only two bodies which own their authority directly to the last National Convention and the membership, namely, the Central Committee and the delegation of the Convention to the Comintern'. The Party understands this threat very well, and knows that it is nothing less than an attempt to set up a parallel body to the CEC, a rival CEC. It will tell Lovestone that the delegation to Moscow was elected by the Polburo on the night before their departure. It will tell Lovestone that the delegation to the CI has no legal existence within the Party except for the execution of the functions assigned to it. This function was to represent the viewpoint of the Party in Moscow. With the decision of the CI on the question involved the delegation ceased to have any legal existence within the Party and can continue its meetings and the formulation of documents only as a caucus in defiance of the authority of the Party and of the CI.

The Central Committee of the Party, the responsible leading body of the Party, is exercising its authority and duty in spite of Lovestone. It has answered Lovestone's splitting tactics through the Political Committee and will answer as decisively in its coming Plenary session.

Precisely at a time when the Political Committee of our Party has become a real leading body, discussing the policies and tactics of our organization, Lovestone complains of the liquidation of the Polcom. As long as he confined the activities of the Polcom to rubber-stamping the decisions of his faction, he had no fault to find with the functions of the Polcom. But when the Polcom begins to disregard the interests of his faction and consider only the problems of the Party, then his ire is aroused and he raves of 'degeneration'. Were it not so serious, one could laugh at the 'Knight of the Sorrowful Figure', the Don Quixote Lovestone, whose mind and body are still wandering in the far-gone past and who tries to force the condemned and dead practices of the past into the healthy pulsating Party life of the present.

15. For the Sixth-Congress Decision, for the Preservation of the Leninist Line of our Party. Against the Party-Wrecking Campaign. Against the Expulsion. For Bolshevik Unity¹⁶

In its criminal course of splitting and wrecking the Party and revising the fundamentals of Leninism and the line of the sixth Congress [17 July–1 September 1928], the Political Committee has already reached the point of expelling the delegation selected by the last convention of our Party to present its views to the Comintern. At the same time, the Polburo has decreed the expulsion of other leading comrades who are venturing to exercise their rights and duties as Party members and express their views as to the best interests of the Party in Party committees of which they are members. By ordering the expulsion of comrades Gitlow, Miller, Myerscough, Welsh, White and Wolfe, as well as Benjamin, Nemser and Zam, the Polcom is attempting to drive out of the Party its most experienced, revolutionary members, founders and builders of the Party. At the same time, in its declaration it lays the basis for mass expulsions of rank-and-file comrades already beginning in the districts.

We are given forty-eight hours to submit a statement accepting this Party-wrecking campaign and the anti-Leninist line on which it is based. In answer, we declare:

1. The Address [of the Comintern] and line of the Polburo based upon it are wrong and injurious to the Party and represent a revision of the line of the sixth Congress and the basic principles of Leninism on every important question facing the American Party. Against this revision, which constitutes a menace to the very life of the Party, it is our revolutionary duty to the Party, to the American working class and to the Comintern, to fight.

¹⁶ Mimeographed factional document, likely authored by Benjamin Gitlow, circulated circa 15 August 1929. Copy in Tim Davenport collection.

On the basis of the Address, the Political Committee is proceeding with the destruction of the Party – not only through wrong anti-Leninist policies but through the expulsion and the driving out of precisely those comrades who have for years been the most vigorous fighters against opportunism in the Party's ranks.

Comrades Gitlow, Wolfe, Zam, White, Lovestone, Miller, etc. of the former Party leadership came into the Party leadership through the fight against the opportunist views and policies of such inveterate Right elements as Foster, Lore, Wagenknecht, Bittelman, Cannon, Sulkanen, Askeli, Eastman, Salutsky, Swabeck etc.

The Foster group, which is now being given the Party to complete the wrecking after the Weinstones, Stachels, Bedachts, Minors, and Olgins have completed their dirty work and have been discarded, has always been considered by the Comintern and the Party membership as a right-wing group. . . .

2. The Party membership cannot forget that it is the very comrades who are now being expelled who founded and built our Party in the course of the struggle against imperialist war, against the opportunism of the Social Democracy, and against Right deviations and infantile 'Leftism' inside the ranks of the Communist Party and against Trotskyism. To brand these comrades as an 'anti-proletarian agency of American imperialism' is to reject the best traditions of the American working-class struggle against imperialist war and for proletarian revolution. When Foster and Minor and others of this new 'leadership' were in the camp of the imperialists selling liberty bonds, speaking on behalf of the war, supporting Wilson's imperialist policies, and fighting Bolshevism and the left-wing in the trade unions, we were in the vanguard in the fight against imperialism, the first to raise the banner of the proletarian revolution and the organization of the Comintern in the United States. Nor can the Party membership forget that it is those who have constituted the traditional right wing in our Party that are now expelling us and trying to wreck and split the Party.

3. The Address and the line of the Polburo based upon it have distorted the political line of the Party in the direction of opportunist sectarianism and are fast bringing our Party into a position of isolation from the working masses and their struggles. It has instituted organizational chaos and demoralization in our Party unprecedented in its history. Every vestige of Party democracy and the most elementary rights of the Party leadership have been destroyed. The best cadres of the Party leadership built up through so many years have been wiped out. A shameful spirit of political corruption, hypocrisy, unprincipledness and careerism is being promoted.

4. The destructive anti-Party, Gompers-like campaign of terror and expulsion, in which our expulsion is only a first step of a series, has one and only

one political objective: *to remove from the way all those comrades who resist and fight against the revision of the sixth Congress and of Leninism, and who fight for a Leninist line in our Party.* Precisely because this is the meaning of the campaign of terror and Party wrecking, we will not be intimidated by it.

5. We declare: we will not cease our struggle until we have put an end to this Party-wrecking campaign, restored Party democracy and unity, and placed our Party again on the line of the sixth Congress – the line of Leninism. We declare: we are loyal to our Party and will fight for its continued existence as a Communist Party. We fight as we have always done to build and strengthen our Party and preserve its Communist line. We fight as we have always fought against the Right danger, against opportunist policies, against an opportunist line whether open or masked with Left phrases. We fight against the line of the Address and its application by the Polburo because they destroy the influence of the Comintern among the workers; because they destroy the Communist line of our Party; because they put the Party in the hands of the opportunists; because they have led it into a right-sectarian line; because they split and destroy our movement.

Despite the terror campaign, despite threats of expulsion, despite the slander campaign, the entire Party membership must rally as one against these campaigns and for the unity of the Party to save the Party from the splitters now calling themselves the Party 'leadership', to keep every Party member within the folds of the Party, for the Communist line, for the Leninist line of the sixth World Congress of the Comintern. No Communist, no Party member should directly or indirectly lend the slightest aid to the destructive campaign now being pushed by the Stachels, Bedachts, Minors, Weinstones and Fosters. We repudiate the accusation that we are splitting the Party or that we are organizing a new Party. It is the Stachels, Minors, Weinstones, and Bedachts and Fosters who are themselves splitting the Party and only trying to hide their unpardonable crime against Party unity, which can be achieved only on the basis of the unreserved acceptance and execution of the line of the sixth World Congress of the Comintern. It is for this organic, principled communist unity that we stand.

The only way to save the unity of the Party and to ensure its growth into a mass Party is to fight for correct policies and resist expulsions. All comrades who have the interests of the Party and Comintern at heart will vote unhesitatingly against, speak against, and fight against the expulsion of the previous Party leadership and the comrades following the correct line of the sixth World Congress.

Every member of the Party who has its best interests at heart will be with us in this fight for the life of the Party. Every member loyal to the Party will fight against the expulsions, against the Party splitting of the Stachels, Minors and

Fosters, against the opportunist-sectarian revision of Leninism and of the line of the sixth Congress.

Determined that the Party must be saved and strengthened, with profound confidence in the revolutionary vitality of the Party membership, we are sure that our struggle will in the end be victorious and that the Party will again assume the role it was winning under its former leadership – the role characterised by the sixth World Congress of the Comintern as ‘stalwart leader of stubborn class battles of the American working class’ for the overthrow of American imperialism.

For the Bolshevik unity of the Party!

For the struggle against imperialist war and the defense of the Soviet Union. For a merciless struggle against opportunism and Trotskyism.

For the line of the sixth World Congress of the Comintern.

Against the opportunist anti-Leninist revision of the world program of the Comintern.

Against the Party-wrecking campaign.

For a victorious Communist mass Party in the United States under the leadership of the Comintern.

With communist greetings,

Benjamin Gitlow: For years in the left wing of the Socialist Party. A member of the National Council left wing 1919. Member of every Central Committee since the foundation of the Party except when he was in prison. Member of Presidium of the ECCI and of the Executive Committee of the RILU. Elected Executive Secretary CPUSA after sixth National Convention.

William Miller: In the Party since its foundation. Just expelled from the Machinists Union for Communist activities. Member of the Central Committee.

Edward Welsh: Head of the Negro Department, Young Communist League. Member National Buro YCL. Candidate to CEC.

William J. White: Entered Socialist Labor Party in 1899. One of founders of Party. For years active in strike struggles. Editor *New Castle Free Press* and *Justice*. Member Polburo. Leader of the left wing in the steel industry.

Bertram D. Wolfe: Member of the National Council Left Wing. One of the founders of the Party. Member Polcom. Director of the Workers School and representative of the Party to the ECCI.

D. Benjamin: Assistant Director of the Workers School. Member of the Buro and the Secretariat New York District Committee.

Morris Nemser: In Party since its foundation. For many years active in the Bolshevik movement in Russia. Member of the Central Control Commission.

Herbert Zam: In Party since its foundation. Formerly representative of the YWCLA to YCI. Member of the EC YCI since March 1926. National Secretary of YWCLA. Candidate Central Committee.

16. Statement of the Polbureau of the CPUSA on Expulsions¹⁷

Pursuant to the Polbureau decisions of 12 August [1929], the Secretariat of the Central Committee addressed individual letters to all the Party members named in the decision and demanded an answer from them within forty-eight hours. These individual letters have now been answered by a collective statement signed by D. Benjamin, B. Gitlow, W. Miller, M. Nemser, E. Welsh, W. White, B. Wolfe and H. Zam.

In their declaration, the signatories declare that: 'The Address and line of the Polbureau based upon it are wrong and injurious', and that: 'On the basis of the Address the Political Committee is proceeding to wreck the Party', and further, that: 'we will not cease our struggle' and, finally, that 'we fight against the line of the Address and its application by the Polbureau'.

The Polbureau and the ECCI demanded of these members of the Party a repudiation of their declaration of war against the Comintern. They answered this demand by declaring 'we will not cease our struggle' and 'we fight against the line of the Address and its application by the Polbureau'.

The Polbureau and the ECCI demanded of these members of the Party a repudiation of their insolent counterrevolutionary cable to the ECCI. They ignore this demand.

The Polbureau demanded that these members of the Party repudiate the openly anti-Party and anti-Comintern factional documents circulated by the Lovestone splitters within and around the Party. They answer by declaring this unprecedented warfare against the Party 'the right and duty of Party members'.

The Polbureau demanded from these Party members a repudiation of Lovestone's counterrevolutionary attack against the Party for its activities on International Red Day. They answer with silence.

The Polbureau and the ECCI demanded that these Party members live up to the conditions of membership in the Communist International expressed in the twenty-one points [conditions]. Point 16 declared that '**All of the**

17 *Daily Worker*, vol. 6, no. 145 (24 August 1929), p. 2.

resolutions of the congresses of the Communist International as well as the resolutions of the Executive Committee are binding for all parties'. They answer with a declaration that the decision of the ECCI on the problem of the American Party does not suit them and that, therefore, they 'will not cease' their struggle against it.

The statement of these Party members again reiterated the Lovestone opportunist platform in opposition to the line of the sixth World Congress. With petty-bourgeois arrogance it declares that the right and duty to define the line of the Communist International does not rest with the Communist International but from among all the dozens of sections of the Comintern, falls upon the shoulders of Lovestone. With the powers of sole arbiter thus allocated to Lovestone, the document proceeds to condemn the revolutionary application and development of the line of the sixth Congress of the Communist International by the Communist International itself and by the 10th Plenum of its Executive Committee, proclaiming Lovestone's reformist interpretation the only permissible one.

The signatories of the statement evidently feel that although they answered a request of the Comintern to Lovestone with a collective statement signed by all, together with Lovestone, they now produce a collective document without Lovestone. By this maneuver, they aim to create the appearance that they are not tied up organizationally with Lovestone. But their refusal to condemn Lovestone, their association with Lovestone in the cabled reply to the ECCI, their failure to repudiate the provocative attacks of Lovestone on the Party's campaign of 1 August, Gastonia, and others makes them responsible for every anti-Party and anti-Comintern act of Lovestone. The Party understands their maneuver very well: the members have so decisively repudiated Lovestone and stand so firm for the Central Committee and the Comintern as to make the signatories of this document doubt whether it is advisable to appear openly in association with the slanderous attacks of Lovestone against the Party.

With the declaration that they will continue their fight against the Comintern, the signers have registered their unwillingness and unfitness to remain members of our Party. Under lying protestations of adherence to the decisions of the sixth World Congress, they challenge the decisions of the second World Congress concerning the twenty-one conditions of membership in the Communist International.

In recognition of this undeniable fact and in application of the decisions of the Polbureau of 12 August, the following are hereby declared expelled from the Party – D. Benjamin, B. Gitlow, W. Miller, M. Nemser, E. Welsh, W. White, B.D. Wolfe, and Herbert Zam.

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Any association with the expelled, any support given them is incompatible with the duties of membership in the Party.

Political Bureau of the Communist Party of USA

17. Declaration to the Plenum of the Central Committee¹⁸

Speaking in the name of nearly one-third of the CC members, several Central Control Commission members and [Young Communist] League National Executive Committee members, many leading Party and League functionaries, district organizers, District Executive Committee members, and hundreds of removed and expelled proletarian Party members throughout the country, we herewith make the following appeal to the Plenum of the Central Committee:

Our Party is now in its gravest political and organizational crisis. Fundamental differences have arisen because the basic conceptions of our movement are now being changed. The Party is grappling with life-and-death problems. The founders and builders of the Party, fighting for the Leninist line and the decisions of the sixth World Congress of the Comintern [17 July–1 September 1928], have on this account been expelled. There are taking place wholesale expulsions of the oldest, most experienced, best proletarian fighters in the Party ranks because they are resisting the anti-Leninist, revisionist line of the Address and of the 10th Plenum of the ECCI [3–19 July 1929], which is driving our Party into the dangerous morass of opportunist sectarianism.

The Plenum, in order to be a Plenum that is authoritative and responsible, a Plenum that the Party members can take seriously; in order to overthrow the revisionist line and to restore the line of Leninism in our Party; in order to solve the many difficult problems confronting our Party, must be constituted on the basis of the immediate reinstatement in the CC and CCC of the comrades elected by the sixth National Convention of our Party [4–10 March 1929] to these bodies. All comrades removed and expelled from the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, the Polcom and the Secretariat and the National Executive Committee, must be called in to the sessions of the Plenum and are to function as full members.

18 *Revolutionary Age: An Organ of Marxism-Leninism in the United States*, 1 November 1929, p. 5.

On this basis we demand that the following comrades be immediately restored to their rightful places on the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the Party and the National Executive Committee of the Young Communist League, and, furthermore, that they should all be called into the Plenum to make a decision on the pressing questions now before the Party:

CC Members: Bixby, Chester W.; Dawson, Ellen (expelled from the Party by District Bureau); Gitlow, Benj.; Kruse, Wm. F.; Lifshitz, Benj. (suspended from the CEC by the Secretariat and excluded from the Plenum); Lovestone, Jay; Miller, Wm.; Vrateric, Frank; White, Wm. J.; Wolfe, Bertram D.; Zimmerman, Ch. S.

CC Candidates: Bail, Alex; Miller, Bert; Novak, Chas.; Sorenson, J.; Welsh, Edward; Zam, Herbert.

Central Control Commission members: Bentall, J.O.; Nemser, M.

YCL NEC Members: Grey, Dan; Gray, Marion; Lurye, Minnie; Rubenstein, Jack; Silvis, Miriam; Siro, Paul; Welsh, Edward; Yablon, M.

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We emphasise that the Plenum as at present constituted is incompetent and unqualified to consider and act upon the problems before the Party, because its present composition is an outright violation of the decisions of the sixth National Convention – the highest authority in our Party on the basis of the Party and CI Statutes. We declare that with one-third of the Central Committee expelled – including the previous Party leadership, founders of the Party, leaders in the Party's mass struggles – such a Plenum cannot speak on behalf of the Party.

Comrades: Bolshevik unity of the Party on the basis of rejection by the Party of its present anti-Leninist line and the unreserved acceptance and execution of the line of the sixth World Congress is an absolutely urgent necessity. Only such unity can save our Party from ruinous opportunism. Great tasks are before us. Splendid opportunities for Communist work are at hand. With a correct, with a Leninist policy, our Party can make great headway towards becoming a mass Communist Party leading the American proletariat to victory over the bourgeoisie, to the destruction of United States imperialism. We demand that in the best interests of the Party and the Comintern you should act favorably on our appeal and proposals. . . .

Organizational Chaos and Demoralization

The forcing of the anti-Leninist line of the Address upon the Party could only be accomplished by the most destructive *inner-Party line* ever witnessed in our movement. In the first phases it took the form of the 'enlightenment campaign', the blighting effects of which were instantaneous.

The expulsion campaign began almost immediately. Every doubt, every question, every criticism was answered by expulsion. Comrades were expelled for not voting for somebody else's expulsion. One of the officially recognised conditions for remaining in the Party was to 'recognize the correctness of' the Address, in other words, to exercise a sort of religious faith. As a result, in less than six months after the Address, *over four hundred of the leading functionaries of our Party have already been expelled*. There have been expulsions in every district of the Party. These comrades – who are branded as 'renegades' and 'agents of American imperialism' because they defend the Leninist line – are in general the oldest and the best revolutionary forces of our Party, its founders and builders. They constitute the historically developed cadres of our Party which are now being destroyed.

But the expulsion campaign has only just begun. The Party-wrecking course is penetrating every Party organization and every Party unit. All those who show the least dissatisfaction with the ruinous course in the Party are branded as 'right-wingers' or 'conciliators' and are summarily dealt with. *The Party is being split and wrecked by its 'new leadership'!*

Lately, the 'enlightenment campaign' has set into a new stage. In desperation at the failure of their tactics of terror, misrepresentation, slander and expulsion, the Party 'leaders' have resorted to the worst methods of the reactionary trade-union bureaucrats – to *hooliganism* and *gangsterism*. Meetings of Party members and left-wing workers, some held in private houses, have been broken into by specially mobilised gangs and violent attacks made, resulting in serious injuries. While such tactics cannot stop our struggle, they can and certainly do discredit the name of Communism among the masses of the workers and do permanent injury to the revolutionary movement.

The wrecking of the Party and the false political course has already shown itself in the *paralysis and destruction of the Party organization*. From the thirteen thousand members the Party could count under the former leadership, it is doubtful if more than five thousand remain. The 'new leadership' has ceased publishing financial and dues reports. The loss in membership is generally recognised and admitted and is justified by the Party wreckers on the ground that 'with the loss of members the Party is becoming more bolshevised!' . . .

Discipline and Party Democracy

That the 'new course' and the 'new leadership' represent a serious danger to the development of our Party and indeed to the whole revolutionary movement in this country, is now clear. That it is the duty of every honest Party member, of every Leninist, of every comrade having the best interests of the Party at heart, to fight against the 'new course' and the 'new leadership' and for a restoration of the Leninist line of our Party as the condition for its healthy development, should now be equally clear. But shall our fight be limited by the rules of 'legality' laid down by the Party bureaucrats themselves for their own protection; shall our struggle for Leninism be bound by the conceptions of 'discipline' that these Party wreckers have developed in order to safeguard their revisionist line? . . .

There are still a large number of well meaning comrades – the so-called 'conciliators' – who declare that they disagree with the revisionist line but because they are 'disciplined Communists' they must surrender to all conditions of the Party wreckers, even to the extent of declaring that they 'agree' with the 'new course' when they really disagree with it. This they must do to 'maintain their positions' and 'to remain in the Party', in order to be able, so they declare, 'to fight the wrong line from within'. They do not see that when they give up their convictions they give up everything. The least little whisper or movement they make against the Party-wrecking course will be the occasion for contemptuous expulsion. The only condition on which they will be tolerated will be if they 'obey the law and keep their mouths shut' – and help in the campaign of Party wrecking. Otherwise out they go – in spite of all pious phrases.

Other 'conciliators' declare that they will maintain discipline as a 'maneuver'. They are convinced that the present 'leadership' and its line will collapse in a short time. By 'maintaining discipline', by 'agreeing' with and voting for everything, they aim to adapt themselves as far as possible and hold on to their positions, so that when the 'new leadership' collapses they will be there to 'save the Party'. They fail to see that their capitulation (maneuver or not) throws them in the camp of the Party wreckers whose work they are obliged to do and which tars them with the same stick. When the 'new leadership' collapses they will go with it too, for they are birds of a feather. They fail to see an even bigger thing: that such a policy, if adopted by all of us, would inevitably ensure the ruin of the Party. If the present false ultra-left and Party-wrecking line is allowed to continue without meeting the very sharpest resistance, if there are no comrades in the Party who hold their convictions and the future of the Party above their positions, then inevitably thousands and thousands of workers will

lose their faith in the Party and the prestige of the Party among the masses will suffer incalculable and irreparable damage. One thing we must decide: *to place the life and the Leninist line of the Party above everything else!*

Perspectives

It is clear that against the widespread and deep-going revision of the line of Leninism which has thrown the whole Communist International into profound crisis, it is the duty of every true revolutionist, of every Communist to *fight*. But the problem is not exhausted with the formulation of this fundamental fact. On what *basis* to fight, *how* to fight, what shall be our *perspectives* in the fight are questions of primary importance which must be answered in clear and unambiguous terms.

Our struggle is *not* for the foundation of a 'new' Party. There cannot be two communist parties in any one country. The only circumstances in which the Communists of any country can be faced with the task of organizing a 'new' Communist Party is when the hitherto existing Communist Party, for some reason or other, disappears as a Communist Party, when, in essence and in fact, it ceases to exist. . . .

Basing ourselves upon the actual situation in the Comintern and in our Party and upon a realistic analysis of the forces at work, we must declare that *we reject the perspective of a 'new' Party* or any tendencies in that direction. Now as always our objective remains: *the winning and the saving of the Party and the Comintern, the restoration of their Leninist line!*

What does the *winning of the Party* mean? Does winning the Party mean 'converting' the 'new leadership', winning over the individuals who now compose the first and second layers of the Party apparatus after the best functionaries in the Party have been expelled? Nonsense! Although we do not by any means deny the possibility – and even the necessity – of winning over certain elements of the present leadership, we do not base ourselves upon such expectations. We do not build a house on sand. We understand very well that the saving of the Party can only be accomplished through the elimination from leadership of the bulk of those who today use their leading positions to destroy the Party. They have so compromised themselves by their unprincipledness in the eyes of the Party membership and of the revolutionary workers that a fundamental change of the political line of the Party can take place only through the elimination of these elements. The winning of the Party means: *the mobilization of the Party membership and the revolutionary workers for the overthrow of the 'new leadership' and its destructive political and inner-Party course.* This is our objective and our perspective. It remains unchanged – indeed it is

strengthened – by the slime and slander heaped upon us by the Party bureaucrats, by the mass expulsions of our best forces, by the whole campaign of terror and wrecking in the Party and in the mass organizations.

For this reason we are not for a ‘new’ Party, nor are we striving in that direction. We are *an organized political tendency, a group within the Communist Party*, fighting against the anti-Leninist course that is eating away its very foundations, striving to save it and to restore it to its rightful position in the working-class movement. All attempts to ‘expel’ us from the Party and the Comintern cannot change this fact. For we do not regard the Party as the private possession of these ‘new leaders’ to do with as they please. The Party is a definite section of its class – its advanced section, and from this no one can expel us! . . .

We are confident that the best elements of the Party membership will in the end rally to our struggle, no matter what their position may be now. The bulk of our members and of the sympathetic workers around the Party are Communists at bottom, and sooner or later, through the experience of life itself, they will come to a realization of the great danger to the Communist movement in the present revisionist line and the present leadership. It is upon these forces that we base our confident assurance of ultimately winning and saving the Party.

PART 3

Evolution of the Communist Party Opposition



Russia and International Affairs: 1929–36

Editors' note: The material gathered in this section bears all the earmarks of the Lovestone group's general orientation down to 1936. It is clear that Lovestone and his comrades saw themselves as an organic component of the world-Communist movement, simply seeking the reform of that movement in a manner that would make it possible for them to function within it and to assume, once again, an influential role within the ranks of the US Communist Party. This orientation is the framework for all that the Lovestoneites had to say between 1929 and 1936.

The necessary reforms would involve two basic issues: (1) the extreme heavy handedness in the Stalin leadership's insistence – within the Communist International – that it (not the national leaders or memberships) should be in control of the development of tactics and policies to be carried out within and by the Communist parties of the various countries, and (2) the ultra-left and sectarian line flowing from an analysis – adopted in 1928 and deepened in 1929 – that has taken on the label of 'Third Period'.

According to Stalin and his co-thinkers in the late 1920s, the so-called 'First Period' involved the revolutionary upsurge inaugurated by the Russian Revolution of 1917 that generated the rise of the insurgent Communist movement throughout the world; the 'Second Period', stretching from the early 1920s to the late 1920s, had involved the ebbing of the revolutionary tide and a stabilisation of capitalism, requiring the moderation of Communist tactics; the 'Third Period' was one in which there would be a generalised breakdown of capitalism, opening the way for the global triumph of Communist-led revolutions. Isaac Deutscher aptly summarised this as follows:

The Communist parties in the west were to launch their final offensive against capitalism. The reformist Social Democratic parties, now labeled Social-Fascist, were to be regarded as the most dangerous enemies of communism. The left wings of the Social Democratic parties were to be regarded as even greater obstacles to Socialist revolution than the right ones – 'the more to the left the more dangerous'. Any cooperation or contact between Communists and Social Democratic leaders was

contaminating. The Comintern was to muster its ranks for the world wide struggle, relying exclusively on its own strength and pull.¹

Lovestone's 'The Crisis in the Communist International' – while fiercely critical of the new line – attributes it to the gap between the 'rapid construction of Socialism' in the USSR and the slow tempo of socialist revolution in the capitalist West. While critical of Stalin's 'narrowing' of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Communist International, he expressed optimism about the likelihood of objective realities in the class struggle imposing a correction in the policies (and perhaps the composition) of the Soviet leadership. At the same time, the Lovestone group was absolutely loyal to the Soviet Union and the defence of this 'socialist homeland' in the face of possible imperialist aggression from the world's capitalist powers, as indicated in Alex Bail's 'Defend the Soviet Union! Smash the Imperialist "Holy War" Against the USSR'. They were also hopeful and supportive of the spread of anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and socialist struggles throughout the world, as indicated in many articles about struggles, particularly in Asia and Latin America. One example was the 1930 report, 'Wave of Revolt Sweeps India' (where they nourished a relationship with the famous expelled dissident Communist M.N. Roy).

There were definitely critical notes on developments in the USSR, blaming the Stalin leadership for adopting 'Trotskyist' policies against the more moderate economic-development policies represented by Bukharin – a point made both in Louis Becker's article 'Dizzy with Success' (which cites an article of that title by Stalin himself) and in Lovestone's article 'Thirteen Years of the Russian Revolution', in which we are told, nonetheless, that 'it is in the Soviet Union that we have the greatest democracy based on Soviet power'. The greatest threat, however, is identified in the most virulent form of fascism, represented by Adolf Hitler's growing Nazi movement in Germany – against which Lovestoneite co-thinkers in Germany (a substantial group of expelled Communist Party oppositionists led by Heinrich Brandler and August Thalheimer) were attempting

1 Deutscher 1967, p. 405. Deutscher explains (Deutscher 1967, pp. 406–7) how Stalin theorised that, since social democracy should be seen politically as a moderate wing of the bourgeoisie, with the fascists representing its militant wing, 'they are not antipodes but twins', and 'objectively, Social Democracy is the moderate wing of fascism' – it was more capable of fooling and disorienting the potentially revolutionary workers, and therefore should be (more than the actual fascists) the primary target of Communist hostility. This contributed decisively to the Communist/Social-Democratic disunity that paved the way for the 1933 triumph of Hitler in Germany (Deutscher 1967, pp. 406–9). See also Eley 2002, pp. 251–2, 261–2.

to form a broad left-wing united front, as described in Lovestone's 1931 article, 'Germany at the Crossroads' and – as the worst was happening – in the 1933 article, 'The Nazis Take Power'.

Yet the USSR continued to be projected as a model of socialism well worth defending – for example, in Will Herberg's 'Jews in Russia – Negroes in the USA'. The Lovestone group's 'On the General Line and Inner-Party Course of the CPSU' was careful, in 1932, to combine various criticisms with support for 'the general line' mapped out for 'socialist construction' in the Soviet Union by the Stalin leadership. It expressed a hopeful attitude, in 1934, that various parties in the Stalin-led Communist International were backing away from the ultra-leftism of earlier years and were beginning to collaborate with sections of the International Communist Opposition (ICO, a collection of expelled dissident Communists with which the Lovestone group collaborated).² It urged the US Communist Party to do likewise. In a remarkable 1935 survey, *Soviet Foreign Policy and World Revolution* (excerpts of which appear here), Lovestone offered a far-reaching defence of Stalin's foreign policy, and in a *Workers' Age* editorial of 1936, while suggesting that leniency might have been wise for tactical reasons, the Lovestone group went on record supporting Stalin's purge trial of Gregory Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev and other Old Bolsheviks – as well as the justness of their execution.



² Alexander 1981, pp. 135–291 offers considerable information on the ICO and its component parts.

1. The Crisis in the Communist International³

Jay Lovestone

Only the wilfully blind can today deny that there is a crisis in the Communist International. Only the ignorant or politically feeble-minded can mistake its full extent and gravity.

Some of the basic conceptions of our movement are today being revised on a world scale. The leadership of our Communist World Party has never been so unfit and unrepresentative as it is today. Never has the base of the leading Party of the Comintern, the CPSU, been so narrow. The old guard, consisting of the closest Bolshevik associates of Lenin, has been destroyed – Bukharin, the recognised theoretician of the international movement and the author of the program of the Communist International, being the last to go. In the *German* Party, the flower of the revolutionary proletariat, the associates of Liebknecht, Luxemburg, Mehring and Zetkin, almost the entire *Spartakusbund*, have already been expelled or are now about to be expelled and the Party itself is rapidly declining both in membership and in mass influence. In *France*, some of the best militants (Vaillant-Couturier, etc.) have been removed and whole organizations, such as the famous ‘red belt’ of Paris (Clichy, Saint Denis, etc.) and the entire Party in Alsace have been expelled. The CGTU, the Red Trade Union Federation, is in danger of disintegration. The membership and influence of the Party are falling fast. In *Czechoslovakia* we see a picture of real disaster. The once powerful CPCz has lost eighty percent of its membership within eighteen months. The Red Trade Union Federation and all mass organizations are split. The best Party leaders, Jílek, Muna, etc., the traditional ‘lefts’, have been expelled along with tens of thousands of others under the guise of ‘fighting the right-wingers’ and the Party given over to the historical right wing (Kreibich, Šmeral, Zápotocký) in alliance with the new incompetent elements. In *England*, despite the most favorable objective conditions, the Party has lost membership so rapidly that it now officially records only two-and-a-half thousand members. The disastrous results of the last general elections

3 *Revolutionary Age*, 1 December 1929, pp. 10–11.

and the impotence of the Party in the trade unions are further evidence of the situation in the CPGB. In *Sweden*, the Party now is in a deep crisis that has already shown itself in the expulsion by the ECCI of precisely that leadership (Kilboom, Samuelson, Flyg) that was able to defeat Höglund, increase tremendously the membership and prestige of the Party, and win the support of the overwhelming majority of the membership. In *Norway* and *Denmark*, the parties have steadily lost in membership and are disappearing as factors in the labor movement. In *Italy* the foisting of a new version of the Bordiga line upon the Party has led to the expulsion of its most outstanding figure (Serra) and to a state of growing paralysis in the Party as a whole. In *Austria* the expulsion of many of the oldest revolutionary forces and the forcing upon the Party of the most extravagant ultra-left adventurism are proceeding hand-in-hand. In *China*, the CP is no more than a shadow of its former self, while the Red Trade Unions are now officially liquidated. Throughout the whole Comintern, conditions are the same.

The disastrous consequences of the 'new course' in our Party – opportunist sectarianism and isolation on the one hand, and Party wrecking on the other – are too well known to need emphasis. To 'fight the Right danger', the Party leadership has been given – against the expressed will of ninety percent of the membership – to the extreme opportunist Foster group. Instead of the thirteen thousand members recorded at the time of the last Party Convention (March 1929), our Party now numbers no more than about five thousand. Its influence among the masses has declined even more.

All over the world the signs are the same. Considered most generally, the international crisis manifests itself mainly in the following ways: a serious revision of some of the basic principles of Leninism, especially in strategy and tactics, in the direction of ultra-left sectarianism, leading to an increasing loss of influence among the proletarian masses and to growing isolation. These are bound up with a most ruinous and destructive inner-Party course, and they all show themselves in a dangerous depletion of the best leading forces, the destruction of every sign of Party democracy, a huge loss in membership through wholesale expulsions and demoralization, a sharp decline in the quality and social composition of the membership, and a process of disintegration of the mass organizations and of the revolutionary forces with them.

The crisis is international. No section of the Comintern is exempt from it. Its severity is brought out in especially tragic relief by the fact that it occurs in a period of increasingly favorable conditions for revolutionary activity and for the growth of the Communist Party, in a period of leftward movement and rising struggles.

The Basic Causes of the Crisis

It is utterly wrong to maintain that the Comintern is 'degenerating' and 'going out of existence'. This is the viewpoint of the social democrats who, to quote Mr. Hillquit, talk of the 'almost total collapse of Communism' and brand our movement as 'fictitious and unreal'. The role the Comintern has played and will yet play – in fact, is still playing today in spite of everything – as the leader of the international proletarian revolution is a sufficient answer to the treacherous social-reformists.

The present crisis is not a crisis of collapse. Out of this crisis, as a result of the growing movement fighting for the restoration of the Leninist line of the Comintern, will arise a healthier, more powerful World Communist Party with sections far better equipped to lead the proletariat to victory!

There are some who hold comrade Stalin, as an individual, responsible for the crisis. Without underestimating this side of the question and recognizing that comrade Stalin more than anyone else symbolises the present ruinous course, and in full agreement with Lenin's estimate of his terrific destructive capacities, it is nevertheless clear that a deep international crisis cannot be traced to one man. The sources must be sought for deeper.

The basic cause of the crisis in the Comintern lies in the *objective world situation*. The fundamental reason for the present severe – though temporary – crisis is to be found in *the gap that has developed between the victorious proletarian revolution and the rapid construction of socialism in the USSR, and 'the slow development of the proletarian revolution in West Europe' (Lenin) and in the USA.*

The difficulties and hardships confronting the Russian proletariat and its Party in the construction of socialism form one consequence of this 'gap'. The other is the crisis in the Comintern.

The Comintern and the CPSU

To the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the Party of Lenin, the Party of the first victorious proletarian revolution, naturally falls the position of the leading Party in the Comintern; therefore the developments within the CPSU have always been of great importance to the life of the Comintern. Since the October [1917] victory the various crises of the Soviet Party have generally been political reflections of the difficulties of socialist construction. Since the death of comrade Lenin, the course of inner-Party struggles in the CPSU has been accompanied by a systematic thinning out of the leadership that the CPSU has been able to give the Communist International, our world Party. Compare the

brilliant forces of the Russian Party thrown into Comintern work up to the first four World Congresses [1919–24] with the incompetents and political ignoramuses who are ‘leaders’ today. At the first World Congress, the Russian delegation consisted of: *Lenin, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Stalin, Trotsky, Chicherin, Ossinsky* and *Vorovsky*. Of these only Stalin remains! Today, Molotov, characterised by Lenin as an ‘incurable fool’, occupies the place in the Comintern once held by Zinoviev and later by Bukharin! Only yesterday, Petrovsky (Dr. Goldfarb), now expelled for his counterrevolutionary record, headed the Agitprop Department of the Comintern and decided the fates of the British and American parties! Today, Lozovsky, an old Menshevik who joined the Bolsheviks only after he had failed to prevent their victory, lays down trade-union tactics and leads the parties to ruin and isolation! Today Martynov, a Menshevik until 1923, edits the official organ of the Comintern, *Communist International*!

These two factors – first, the growing gap between the upward march of socialist construction in the USSR and the slow development of revolution in the capitalist world and, secondly, the narrowing of the leadership within the CPSU and therefore of the leadership of the CPSU in the Comintern – have led to the *failure of the present leadership of the CI to draw the direct conclusions from the law of uneven development of capitalism and to lay down for the various countries a line of struggle based upon a realistic Leninist estimate of the objective situation*. Merely to suggest that this should be done has become a gross ‘opportunist’ error – ‘exceptionalism’!

This condition has been aggravated by some other factors; the distortion of the leading role of the CPSU in the Comintern, the failure to develop a collective leadership in the Comintern and the initiative and self-reliance of the sections. Political leadership is one thing, but mechanical clique-domination is another. The first was exemplified by the role of the Russian Party in the Comintern under Lenin – the other by this present role of the Stalin-Molotov leadership today. Under the conditions of the present narrow factional regime it is out of the question to expect the real Leninist organic relationship between the leadership of the Soviet Party and the leaderships of the other parties, which alone makes possible the realization of the leading role of the CPSU. Every attempt at independent activity and thought is suppressed, every venture at self-initiative is frowned upon and Party leaderships are openly conceived as ‘rubber stamps’ and organs of factional support to the ruling (Stalin) group in the leading Party.

This present unhealthy relationship between the CPSU and other parties in the Comintern is not a sudden manifestation. It has been growing for some time but it now expresses itself in an acute form. All of us, at one time or another, have participated in various phases of this non-Leninist activity. The campaign against Trotskyism, for example, suffered from these anti-Leninist

methods, especially in its last phases. Had such methods been avoided, the *ideological* struggle against the errors of Trotskyism would have been far more effective and Trotskyism *ideologically* would not have become as strong as it did in the CPSU and in the Comintern. Moreover, had such methods been avoided, there would not have been driven into Trotskyism, and thus removed from effectiveness in the CPSU and the Comintern, such valuable and highly capable comrades as Zinoviev, Kamenev etc. It is only after such methods were permitted to develop that the struggle against opportunism and Right deviations could be transformed into a destructive factional instrument to overturn leaderships and destroy parties.

Nor is the problem of developing a *broad collective international leadership* in the Comintern a new one. Lenin more than once emphasised this task and pointed to it as one means of overcoming the 'gap' caused by the slowing down of the revolution in the capitalist world. This problem has always linked up with the necessity of developing the initiative and self-reliance of the leaderships of the individual sections. At the seventh Plenum [of the ECCI] (December 1926) particularly, both of these problems were prominent and at that time the words of comrade Stalin in the joint meeting of the Russian and American delegations showed the line of the Comintern:

Hands off the American Party! It is developing in the right direction. It is doing good work. We must not do anything to interfere with the American comrades who are beginning to develop a real Communist leadership . . .

But this has now changed. Today instability, a lack of political character, servility and unprincipledness are more and more becoming the prerequisites for 'leadership' in the Comintern – from the ECCI down.

All of these factors have manifested themselves politically in a revision of some of the most fundamental principles of Leninism, especially on questions of strategy and tactics, and in a thoroughly un-Leninist estimation of the present objective situation and the course of development of the struggle. This is the course of the crisis in the Comintern.

The Outlook

The present crisis in the Comintern comes only as the climax of the cumulative effects of years. It appears in an especially acute form today because we are now at a turning point in the development of the post-war revolutionary

movement. In the USA too, the crisis broke out at a turn of the road, just as our Party was first beginning to develop into a mass Communist Party.

The crisis is acute and is growing more acute every day. But there is no ground for pessimism. We have unbounded faith in the revolutionary vitality of the proletarian forces organized in our world Party. The very sharpening of the class struggle itself will prove a powerful factor hastening the restoration of a Leninist political line and inner course in the Comintern. The Social-Democratic prophets of 'degeneration' and 'collapse' are doomed to bitter disappointment.

Through the present period of stress and storm we can already see the beginning of the concentration of precisely those forces in the world-Communist movement which the Comintern most sorely needs. Today this concentration takes place largely in the ranks of the international opposition movements arising in the struggle against the revision of Leninism and against the effects of this revision in the various sections. But tomorrow the Comintern and all its sections will become once more the united banner-bearers of Leninism!

A number of positive features of the present international crisis are already visible:

1. The growth of Leninist self-reliance and initiative in the ranks of the Communists – even at the pain of temporary 'expulsion'.
2. The development of a truly Leninist, critical approach of a mechanical formal-routine attitude and outlook.
3. The evaluation of principledness and firmness of political conviction above factional or 'apparatus' advantage.
4. The development on an international scale of firm Communist cadres who are learning to place in a theoretically correct manner the concrete application of the Comintern program on the basis of the specific objective conditions.
5. An increasing seriousness of attitude towards the responsibilities of leadership and a welding together of earnest Bolshevik leading cadres rooted in the masses and consequently the *laying of a basis for a general collective international leadership*.

The forces in the various sections of the Comintern fighting for the restoration of the line of Leninism are not the appendix of any group in the CPSU, victorious or defeated. Our fate is bound up with the struggle against the revision of the basic line of Leninism by the present ECCI leadership. In the end Leninism will triumph!

2. Defend the Soviet Union! Smash the Imperialist 'Holy War' against the USSR!⁴

Alex Bail

A new offensive against the Soviet Union is in preparation. This is not separate or distinct from the previous efforts of world imperialism to overthrow the Soviet government. The coexistence of two opposite and hostile systems in society has in itself been the basic cause of all anti-Soviet movements since the establishment of the Soviet power. In this general and chronic condition of the hostility of imperialism, there are moments when this hostility assumes an especially acute form and the danger of an armed offensive becomes imminent. Such a condition arose at the time of the Arcos [All-Russian Cooperative Society] raid (1926), the near expulsion of the Soviet ambassador from France and, more recently, the Manchurian affair.

Those who believe that the anti-Soviet front has been definitely shattered and that therefore 'the first victory of proletarian revolution (USSR) is permanent' are harbouring dangerous illusions. Equally dangerous are the theories that 'the "neighbours" are not likely to unite in a world coalition against Soviet Russia' or that it is possible for any length of time to maintain 'an equilibrium between two existing though contradictory economic systems'. Such conceptions tend to weaken the watchfulness of the masses against the coming offensive and to slow up the tempo in the mobilization of broad masses to hamper and defeat any anti-Soviet imperialist plot.

The chief imperialist powers may differ as to the methods or plans for this attack, since each desires to carry out such a plan as will best benefit its own imperialist aims; but basically they are as one in their desire to destroy their common enemy – the proletarian state.

We are witnessing today the rapid transformation of the chronic condition of hostility between world imperialism and the USSR into an *actual acute war danger* against the Soviet Union. We are witnessing today the feverish prepa-

4 *Revolutionary Age*, 1 March 1930, p. 3.

rations for this offensive. Every agency of imperialism has been put to work to create the proper basis for this onslaught. The Mexican government, that puppet of Wall Street, has broken relations with the Soviet government and has subjected the Soviet representative to arrest in the most provocative manner. The New York State Legislature has utilised the religious issue for adopting a resolution against the Soviet Union and Congress has before it a resolution calling for international action against the Soviet Union. 'Comrade' Henderson and 'Comrade' Lord Passmore (Sidney Webb) assure Parliament that all necessary precautions have been taken against Communist propaganda and that they will insist on the right of the Russian priests to plot against the Soviet Union. Leaders of the government bloc of Tardieu in the French Chamber of Deputies clamour for a break with the Soviets because of the 'disappearance' of the counterrevolutionary Russian general, Kutepov. The Social-Democratic Reichstag leaders fully support the 'Western orientation' of the German bourgeoisie, which is aimed at a break with the Soviet Union. The Pope, bishops, and rabbis have raised the cry of 'religious liberty' in Russia and are marshalling their flocks throughout the world for war against the 'godless'. In truth, a holy alliance!

The cries raised on the various sections of the imperialist front do not reveal the true cause of the present intensified drive against the Russian workers. Cries of 'religious liberty' and 'war on the godless' are thrown out to confuse and mislead millions of workers in imperialist countries, just as in World War I the cry of 'Save the world for democracy!' covered up the true economic causes of the war. The real cause of the present offensive lies in the increasing economic difficulties of world imperialism on the one hand, and in the giant strides forward made by the Soviet Union on the other.

1. The sharpening economic rivalries between the two imperialist giants – the US and Great Britain – are rapidly reaching the point where a resort to arms is necessary to determine world hegemony. With this also grows the conviction, among the imperialists, that unless an attempt is made to destroy the Soviet Union, social revolution is inevitable in one or more of the capitalist countries involved in the world war.

2. The attempt by the leading imperialist powers to increase their competitive power on the world market through increasing the exploitation of the colonial masses has resulted in a powerful upsurge of the revolutionary movement in the colonies (India, Indo-China, South Africa, Haiti, the Philippines, Latin America, etc.), whose guide and inspiration is the Soviet Union.

3. The great successes of industrialization and collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union will, if undisturbed, place the Soviet Union in a position of a serious competitor on the already narrowing world market.

4. The successes in socialist construction will strengthen the conviction of growing sections of the toiling masses everywhere that the solution to their problems of permanent mass unemployment, vicious speed-up, and inhuman exploitation is to follow the road of their Russian brothers.

5. The building of socialism in the Soviet Union is not only narrowing the prospects for future profitable concessions, but is actually causing the liquidation of some, and the placing of greater demands upon other concessions already granted.

6. The building of socialism in industry and agriculture and the ensuing sharpened class war in both town and village marks the death-knell of the hopes of the counterrevolutionary cliques of generals and aristocrats for the 'overthrow of the Soviets from within'. A red-baiter and spokesman for Wall Street as rabid as Ivy Lee now recognises this fact.

These are some of the chief causes which are now leading to an offensive such as the Russian workers have not seen since they drove back and destroyed the counterrevolutionary hordes of Kolchak, Denikin and Wrangel.

The duty of all Communists in the face of this situation is to make the defense of the Soviet Union their central task. It is not sufficient to confine this movement to the narrow limits of the Party and its close sympathisers. *The issue of the defense of the Soviet Union and the gains of the Russian Revolution is broad enough in its appeal to arouse large sections of the American working class and even sections of the petty bourgeoisie.* Every avenue and every agency must be utilised – organized and unorganized, militant unions and AFL unions – every organization of working-class composition or sympathy must be drawn into this broad united-front movement.

Against the united front of the imperialists and their Socialist agents we must present a broad united proletarian front to paralyse the effectiveness of the imperialist blows and render active assistance to the Russian toiling masses – the builders of the socialist society!

3. Wave of Revolt Sweeps India: Gandhi Arrested, Imperialist Terror Spreads⁵

The revolt of the Indian masses against their English masters has now reached a point where it is a recognised menace to British imperialism. Gandhi has been arrested and, with him, scores of others fighting for freedom. The revolting masses have risen by the scores of thousands, have captured important cities, such as Solapur, and have held them for a time against greatly superior forces. At Peshawar, the native troops sent against the revolting masses have refused to fire upon their brothers fighting for emancipation. In the large industrial centers, great strikes are breaking out; in the villages the peasants are organizing to resist the payment of rent.

All meetings of more than five persons have been banned in every part of India. Martial law prevails practically everywhere. The Indian Legislature has been prorogued, a strict censorship has been declared, and feverish military mobilization and preparations are taking place in every corner of the vast country. As an English imperialist observer remarks: *'All India is in flames and there is no telling how far the fire will spread.'*

The agent of British imperialism attempting to crush, with fire and sword, the rising of the Indian masses is the MacDonald 'Labor' government of Great Britain, the heads of which claim to be 'socialists' and 'devoted to the interests of the working masses'. Within the last few weeks alone, hundreds of Indians fighting against British imperialist oppression have been murdered by MacDonald's soldiers, while hundreds more have been sent to prison. The reactionary, bloody imperialist character of the so-called 'Labor' government stands self-exposed.

The struggle of the Indian masses for emancipation is part of the world struggle against imperialism. Remembering our own struggle for independence from the British yoke 150 years ago and our struggle today against American imperialism, the American workers and farmers must support with the greatest enthusiasm the revolutionary struggle of our Indian brothers.

5 *Revolutionary Age*, 21 May 1930, pp. 1–2.

The Situation in India and the Course of the Revolution

India today is in the period of revolution but not yet in the period of proletarian revolution. Today India is in the period of anti-imperialist nationalist revolution fighting under the slogan of self-determination and complete independence from British rule.

The road to this is a *revolutionary democratic people's alliance* of the workers, peasants, the petty bourgeoisie in the city and intellectuals against imperialism, an alliance based upon the economic and social demands of the masses. For the peasants the national revolution means: the agrarian revolution, taking land away from the princes and the landlords; for the workers it means: strong organization into unions, the 8-hour day, social legislation, etc.; for the entire mass of the people: the establishment of a democratic people's government in place of British imperialism and its native puppet-princes, civil liberties, free and universal education, the abolition of caste disabilities, etc. It is upon such a deep social basis that the Indian national revolution is developing.

Within the revolutionary people's alliance fighting on the basis of the Indian revolution, the working class, as the fundamentally revolutionary class in modern society, must strive for and achieve leadership. The winning of leadership by the working class not only leads to the victory of the nationalist revolution over all obstacles, but also provides the basis for the proletarian revolution which will follow it after a longer or shorter historical interval.

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In India the leadership of the nationalist movement is still in the hands of the petty bourgeoisie and intellectuals, and, even to a large extent, of the right wing of the petty bourgeoisie. Gandhi's political perspective, which is the political perspective of this leadership, is a form of mystical pacifist utopianism arising out of the peculiar historical conditions and traditions of the Indian people. It shrinks from mass force and violence and frowns upon the development of mass action which inevitably passes beyond the bounds of mere passive resistance preached by Gandhi. Gandhi's fanatical pacifism has even led him to declare: 'Lawless physical violence must be stopped, even if that must be done through the government's forced use of arms!' It is clear that the Indian nationalist revolution will only be able to achieve its goal through overcoming and discarding Gandhism. But it is equally clear that today Gandhi (irrespective of his own desires) is a symbol of the revolutionary upsurge in India – the arrest of Gandhi is the symbol of the oppressive hand of British imperialism. That is

why the Communists and all revolutionary forces the world over must protest against the arrest, and demand the liberation of Gandhi.

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One of the most painful manifestations of the crisis in the Communist International today is the Indian situation. In the face of a real revolutionary upsurge, the leadership of the Communist International, which is so ready to discover 'revolutionary upsurges' where none exist, stands paralysed, unable to do anything. *The only solidarity demonstrations so far held either in Europe or America have been held under the auspices of the Communist Opposition!* As the declaration of the Indian opposition Communists makes clear, the present leadership of the Comintern fails completely to understand the character of the present stage of the Indian revolution and is therefore unable to exercise any serious influence over the masses. All that the official-Communist press can do is make the center of its attack not British imperialism and its Labor Party lackeys but – Gandhi! In spite of the extremely favorable objective conditions, no Communist Party exists in India today, while the best and most capable Communists (M.N. Roy and his group) have either been expelled or are going to be expelled very soon. And even today no attempts at establishing a mass basis for the Communist Party of India are being made. Only the struggle of the Communist Opposition holds the promise of a real change in the course of the Communist International and its restoration to a condition where it will really be able to serve as the organizer and leader of the world revolution!

4. 'Dizzy with Success...' the Factional Mishandling of the Vital Problems of Socialist Construction⁶

Louis Becker

In *Pravda* of 3 March [1930] there appeared an article by comrade Stalin, the now famous article, 'Dizzy with Success'. The very center of this article was the criticism of the local Party committees and the twenty-five thousand workers who had been sent to the villages to help collectivise agriculture for their 'over-zealousness' in carrying out the Party line.

The decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, published in *Pravda* of 16 March, emphasises the same points and declares that these deviations were made by the comrades because '*they did not correctly carry out the line of the Central Committee*'. Examining the situation, it charges the local committees and the 'collectivisers', among other things, with depriving between fifteen and twenty percent of the poor and middle peasants of their right to vote. It also declares that about the same proportion of poor and middle peasants had been placed in the category of kulaks (rich exploiting peasants) and had to suffer the resulting economic, social, and political consequences.

At this moment it is not a question here of who is correct in the dispute between the majority and the minority of the Central Committee of the CPSU on the question of the building of socialism. We want to call attention to the methods employed in handling so important a question. Neither the article of comrade Stalin nor the statement of the CC really reflect the actual nature of the situation and really uncover the actual source of the grave errors in socialist construction which even the official Party authorities and -press can no longer deny. We maintain that the vital question of building socialism in the USSR was factionally mishandled by the Stalin majority of the CC in order to crush the minority of the CC which had warned the Party against the systematic adoption of Trotskyist concepts and slogans in regard to industrialization

6 *Revolutionary Age*, 1 August 1930, p. 9.

and policy in the village. We believe that a mere statement of facts will prove our contentions.

...

Under the caption 'The Central Committee of Georgia recognizes its mistakes', the Central committee of the Communist Party of Georgia (a section of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) declares: 'The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia acknowledges that in the decisions of the January Plenum a number of serious errors were made which expressed themselves in the following: in the decision on the application of the slogan of the liquidation of the kulak as a class, on the new city bourgeoisie, in the declaration in 1930 of whole sections of the country as districts of complete collectivization, in orienting towards the complete collectivization of Georgia . . . , in not concretizing the line and not taking into consideration the specific conditions in the various districts of Georgia'. (*Pravda*, 18 April 1930)

The same issue of *Pravda* reports the decision of the Azerbaijanian Central Committee: 'In the decision of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Azerbaijanian Communist Party about the mistakes and deviations of the *kolkhoz* (collective farm) movement of Azerbaijan, it is pointed out that the instructions of the CC of the CPSU on the tempo of collectivisation and the necessity of taking into consideration the peculiarities of the national republics in carrying out the collectivization by the Caucasian Party organization, especially the Azerbaijanian organization, were issued on time (the beginning of January) but that these instructions of the CC of the CPSU did not find the necessary reflection in the practice of collectivization in Azerbaijan . . .'

After the central committees of the Georgian and Azerbaijanian parties had exercised 'self-criticism', *Pravda* carried a news item that the CC of the CPSU had decided to relieve comrade Krednitsky of his duties as Secretary of the trans-Caucasian Party Committee 'at his own request', and that comrades Kacheyane, Kostayona, Karayev, and Nazaretian were recalled for 'work at the center'. The plenum of the trans-Caucasian Party Committee relieves the above comrades of their duties and co-opted comrades Lominadze and Shaplin to the Presidium; the Plenum selected comrade Lominadze as the first secretary of the committee and comrades Achuinov and Shaplin as secretaries.

And so the scapegoats were removed and comrade Lominadze, who had frequently been noted as the bearer of Trotskyist influence in the Party, was made first Secretary of the All-Caucasian Party after it was recognised on all sides that a number of serious errors in the direction of Trotskyism had been committed! . . .

In *Pravda* of 26 February, we read the speech of comrade Kossior, the representative of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Party, delivered before the functionaries of the Kharkov organization. He asks how it was possible for so experienced a Party to make the mistakes it did. Here is how he explains it: "The 'dizziness from success' in the collective movement started from below whenever it gradually extended to the top. On top this dizziness expressed itself in not being critical enough and not being cautious enough about the reports and figures which were sent to us from the locals ...'

In other words, the fault lies not with the Central Committee which makes the decisions, but with the lower organizations which try to carry them out with very questionable success ... Such is 'Bolshevik self-criticism!' ...

Two things should be noted. First, all of the plenums which are now the subject of 'self-criticism' occurred in January 1930. Secondly, the central committees of the Party organizations in Azerbaijan, Ukraine, White Russia, Georgia, and Siberia all state that they 'did not understand the decisions of the All-Union Communist Party'. All of the Party organizations of the Soviet Union, the entire Party of the Soviet Union, apparently did not 'understand' the decision of the Party. For the sake of argument, let us assume that the entire Party really did not understand the decisions of the Central Committee. Does not the Central Committee of the CPSU get the minutes and reports of the plenums of the parties of the various national republics? Does it not have its representatives? Then why did it take several months to discover that its decisions were not being 'understood', especially as the errors were so grave and so acute?! ...

What are the reasons for these things? How can we explain the farce of the all-powerful Central Committee being 'misunderstood' by everybody, even by the Moscow Committee, the secretary of which was a member of the Politburo? How can we explain the debasing caricature of 'self-criticism' and the system of scapegoats?

The explanation is the following: the Stalin faction of the CC (the majority) began systematically to abandon the platform of socialist construction put forward at the fifteenth Congress of the CPSU (December 1927). It began systematically to borrow from the platform of Trotsky which had been defeated at that Congress. It began to make Trotsky's concepts and slogans into realities (e.g. 'civil war in the village' etc.). The minority of the Central Committee raised a sharp voice of warning against what was happening. Immediately, all the forces of the Party were turned against this minority to discredit and annihilate it. That is why the decisions of the January plenums of the various national republics were hailed as 'correct' and 'Leninist' at the time. But the false line began to have its effects. The shocking results of the Trotskyist line in practice began to manifest themselves everywhere. Reactions began to be felt in the

Party and in the Soviet organs. The wave of resentment and protest mounted. A new turn became absolutely essential. Only then it began to be discovered that there was 'dizziness', that the decisions of the January plenums and the whole policy on which these decisions were based were 'wrong', and that these wrong decisions were adopted against the will of the CC, because the directives of the CC were 'misunderstood'. And off with the heads of the 'misunderstanders'! Such is the method of 'Bolshevik self-criticism' *a la* Stalin! . . .

The same system of leadership has been carried over to the Comintern and to every section of the Comintern. Here too a campaign of extermination against those who resist the wrong line, here too a 'new turn' and the scapegoats and the destructive system goes on . . . The struggle of the international opposition movement has as one of its greatest tasks the liquidation of this dangerous and anti-Leninist system of leadership and its replacement by the system of Leninist democratic centralism, Party democracy, and real self-criticism.

5. Thirteen Years of the Russian Revolution⁷

Jay Lovestone

The thirteenth anniversary of the first victorious working-class revolution is being celebrated in a decisive historical moment.

The capitalist world is in the throes of a deep-going economic crisis. Even the wealthiest and mightiest imperialist countries are oppressed with crushing unemployment, mass misery and starvation. Everywhere the class struggle between the workers and the exploiters is becoming more sharp and bitter. The colonial and semi-colonial countries are becoming more and more estranged from, and hostile to, the imperialist rulers of every flag and country. Among the giant capitalist powers, the conflicts and antagonisms are growing ever more acute, driving the entire world headlong into a new hellish conflagration – a devastating war for profits and plunder.

It is in such a tense atmosphere, it is in such a dynamic, explosive situation, that the working masses of the world are hailing the Soviet fatherland of the international working class. We must be fully aware that the present is fraught with promise and peril for the Workers' and Peasants' Soviet Republic. The very fact that, at a moment of acute crisis in capitalist economy, the Soviet Union has been making great strides in the building up of its heavy industry, in the social reorganization of its agriculture, in short, towards the construction of socialism, has indeed proved a great source of inspiration and encouragement to the oppressed toiling masses the world over. But it is precisely this Soviet economic progress which increases manifold the danger of a concerted imperialist onslaught against the Soviet Union. It is just this which is behind the latest international anti-Soviet drive – in the US, in France, in Romania, in England, in China.

Of course, the charge of dumping levelled against the Soviet Union is ridiculous. It is only a smoke-screen behind which there is being prepared a financial, chemical, military, aerial and naval war on the Federation of Socialist Soviet Republics. Everyone knows that it will take many years of the present

⁷ *Revolutionary Age*, 22 November 1930, p. 5.

rate of economic growth, many more than one Five-Year Plan, for the Soviet Union to be so decisive a factor in the world market as to prove a serious competitor with the giant imperialist powers. And before that time arrives, there will either be another break in one or more of the weaker links in the chain of world capitalism, or another world war in the form of an outright attack on the Soviet Union, or starting as a conflict among the imperialist powers themselves. Only the simplest of fools can believe that the inherent contradictions of capitalism will pause in their tendency towards ever-growing acuteness, that the revolt in the colonial countries will be stilled, that the working masses in the capitalist world will suspend the class war, that the imperialist war danger will abate in the coming years and that instead capitalism will be shaken to its foundations and brought to ruin by the economic prowess of the Soviet Union in the capitalist world market. Capitalism is not built that way, the capitalists are not such fools, and the historical laws of the class struggle do not work that way.

After thirteen years of working-class victory in the Soviet Union and especially in the present worldwide economic crisis, some simple but basic lessons can be brought home even to the most backward workers. It is in the Soviet Union that we have the greatest democracy based on Soviet power. Fascism is growing in the capitalist countries. The Soviet Union is the base of inspiration and an example for the working class and the oppressed colonial masses of the world. Without exception, every other country is a fortress of capitalist reaction, is dominated by a ruling class hopelessly hostile to the aspirations and interests of all the exploited and oppressed. In these days of feverish imperialist war preparations, it is clearer than ever that the only effective way to world peace is the road of militant class struggle, is the road of turning the imperialist war into a civil war against the owning class. Last, and above all, in celebrating this greatest holiday of the world's working class, the thirteenth anniversary of the Soviet Union, we cannot possibly lay too much stress on the all-decisive role of 'the organized political lever by means of which the more advanced proletarian masses' – the Communist Party – leads the masses as a whole. It is the Communist Party with correct Leninist policies that was, and will remain, the absolute prerequisite for working-class victory in all countries, even under the most favorable objective conditions.

In the light of these lessons and in the light of the present objective world conditions, the line of the Executive Committee of the Comintern appears painfully false and ruinous.

In the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the most experienced and tried leaders, the very ones who conceived and initiated the Five-Year Plan at the Fifteenth Party Congress (Bukharin, Rykov), are being hounded, removed

and threatened with expulsion and deportation from the Soviet Union because they dare criticize, even in the faintest manner, the ultra-left and bureaucratic course of the Stalin regime, which all too often has been pursuing policies that are in the long run harmful to the best interests of the Soviet and world proletariat. The Stalin leadership deserves the sharpest rebuke for applying the tactics and strategy of factionalism, in which it is unbeaten and unbeatable, to the economic policies of the Soviet Union, to the leadership and policies of the Party.

In England, where the objective conditions have never before been as favorable for building a mass Communist Party, the Communist movement has never been weaker. And in Germany, where we still have the greatest Communist Party outside of the Soviet Union, the Fascists have been able to garner the greatest gains from the present very acute economic and political crisis, primarily because of the ultra-left, sectarian course of the official line. In India and China the adventurist policies likewise plague the progress of the Communist movement under extremely favorable objective conditions.

Nowhere has the course of the 'new line' proved its bankruptcy more painfully clear than in the US. Here our Party is only a shadow of its former self. Despite the most favorable conditions in history for building a mass movement, despite the deep-going economic crisis, despite its being practically alone in the field of working-class militancy, Communist Party membership has declined to about five thousand; its influence in the conservative unions of mass character has been wiped out; the new revolutionary unions are shattered; the press is on the verge of collapse; a spirit of paralysis and fear grips the Party ranks. Really, whatever successes the Communists have achieved within the last year-and-a-half have come mainly in spite of the new line and only through the greatest sacrifices of our membership. With a correct line, such sacrifices by the rank-and-file would bring far greater results.

Under these conditions, on the thirteenth anniversary of the Soviet Union, it becomes more necessary than ever for us, fighting for Communism in the most powerful imperialist ruling class in the world, to draw inspiration and learn from the achievements, mistakes, and victory of the Russian Bolsheviks, of the Party of Lenin.

To what nobler revolutionary purpose could we today dedicate ourselves than to the task to which we have for many years given our all – the task of building in the United States a mass Communist Party – a mass party with a Leninist line, with correct Communist policies, with mighty roots in the depths of the working class? There can be no more effective weapon than this for the defense of our revolutionary fatherland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Today, more than at any time since the crisis broke out in the world-

Communist movement, can we correctly and energetically reaffirm our adherence to our main aim: 'For communist unity in the revolutionary class struggle'.

Forward to a united Communist Party in the US!

Forward to a unified Communist International, under the banner of Leninism, leading to victory the working class and oppressed colonial masses of the world!

Hail the Soviet Union!

6. Germany at the Crossroads: Fascism on the Rampage⁸

Jay Lovestone

Less work, less bread, lower wages, no rights! This is the fate decreed for the German toiling masses by the master class of the Reich through the 'hunger regime', the Brüning government. This is what 'Deutschland Über Alles' means today. How long will the German workers stand it? What will they do next? That is what is worrying the governments of England, France and the United States. In 1924 the Dawes Plan 'saved' Germany from proletarian revolution. In 1929 the Young Plan was put over to 'help' Germany once more. It is this very sort of help that is driving Germany deeper into the throes of hunger and anguish. How symptomatic and symbolic of the hopeless contradictions of capitalism! If only the world bourgeoisie would be sure that Fascism would come out of this miserable mess, then they would not worry. Indeed, many would celebrate. But the logic of class war is not determined by hopes or prayers – even of the mightiest moneyed overlords. The German proletariat has yet to be reckoned with.

A Black Winter Ahead

A dreary winter is in store for the workers. More than four million are today jobless and hungry. There is no sign of a let-up as the cold becomes more bitter. Soon many workers will be laid off in the building trades. Spring holds no hope. By then, the battalions of the disemployed working masses may mount to five million. Actually between thirteen and fifteen million human beings will be buried still deeper in poverty, suffering, hunger and misery. And the agricul-

8 First published in *The Revolutionary Age* [New York], vol. 2, no. 10 (7 February 1931), pp. 1, 4.

tural crisis has in store for the great mass of the German peasantry a bumper crop of anxiety and destitution.

Inch by inch, step by step, the German ruling class has been driving back the German workers. Wage cut piles upon wage cut. The tax burden becomes ever more crushing. The political and social rights of the workers are being taken from them. The hard-won gains won through years of costly struggle are being wiped away. The notorious *Notverordnung* [Emergency Decree] legislation of 1 December [1930] was the milestone along the path of the reckless trampling of all rights and interests of the workers. In the eight weeks from 1 December to 1 February, six million workers (inclusive of government employees) have had their wages cut from 6 to 8 percent. Among the millions of workers whose wages have been cut to the marrow are five hundred thousand coal miners, eight hundred thousand metal miners, four hundred and fifty thousand textile workers, three hundred thousand carpenters and woodworkers, and three hundred thousand railway workers. The latter's wages were cut by 16 percent.

But the Brüning government is not an ordinary capitalist coalition government. It is a prelude to Fascism. It is energetically and systematically preparing the ground for full open Fascist control of the government apparatus. This purpose is the underlying, driving force of all its political and economic policies at home and abroad. That's why the full force of the government was brought down on the workers to defeat the Berlin metal traders' strike, to crush the miners in the Ruhr and to play the Fascist game at every turn.

Of course, the treachery of the Social Democrats is the cornerstone of this successful attack against the toiling masses. The adventurist, ultra-left and splitting policies of the new line of the Communist Party only fertilize the soil for the Fascist victory tomorrow. Split and split again were the red threads of the official Communist strategy in the Berlin metal trades and in the Ruhr mine strikes. Thus, in the Ruhr, as a result of this policy, no less than three thousand of the best and most devoted Communist and militant fighters have been blacklisted in the pits, taken out of the miners' union and paralysed as effective leaders in the ranks.

Although it is ridiculous to say, as the Communist Party officialdom says, that the German proletariat is already on the offensive, the workers are today ready to fight. This was clear in the splendid strike response of the one hundred and thirty thousand Berlin metal workers, more than half of whom were unorganized. But they lacked effective revolutionary leadership. This the Communist Party cannot supply today because of its false tactics. The Communist Party (Opposition) cannot yet adequately provide such necessary leadership today because of its relative numerical weakness.

Fascism Drives On

Here lies the source of the staggering Fascist success in the last elections, when the 'Nazi' (Fascist) vote rose from eight hundred thousand to six-and-a-half million. Let no one make the mistake. It is not so much from the inflamed, disgruntled, defeated war veterans that Hitler draws his support, as from the youth of Germany.

The youth, so full of energy and so anxious about its future, is being swept into the camp of Fascism. Worse than this. Fascism is winning a foothold in the ranks of the workers. This is the lesson of the Fascist victory in the industrial centers of Thuringia and Saxony. The workers are becoming disillusioned with the Social Democracy. The Communist Party sectarian line and leadership do not inspire them. They despair. In such a hopeless mood they either drift to the 'Nazis' or are swept by the wave of enthusiasm in which the Hitlerites have been engulfed. There have even been cases when whole official Communist Party units – and not only individual social-democratic workers – have gone over to the Fascist Party. Of course, the petty-bourgeois, nationalistic official policy of the Communist Party towards the Versailles Treaty and Young Plan has been only grist to the Fascist mill. It is such non-Communist tactics and principles, couched in left phrases, that have paved the way straight to Fascism for hundreds of thousands of workers.

German Fascism has skilfully and demagogically utilised certain working-class shibboleths to attack and fool workers. 'Bread and Freedom', 'Against the Oppressors' and 'For the Exploited' often appear in the headlines of the Fascist press. The 'Nazis' have even taken over some of our revolutionary melodies and given Fascist words to them. They are contesting all factory elections in order to win away the masses from the Social Democrats and the Communists. In the Berlin metal-trades strike the 'Nazis' put up their own pickets and pretended to fight against the wage cut.

The official Communist Party and many workers in other countries have been suffering from the illusion that German Fascism is only a bubble, which will soon break, only a shadow which will soon disappear. Thus the *Rote Fahne* declared on 16 September [1930]: '14 September was the high water mark of the NSDAP (Fascist) movement in Germany. After this, only decline and disappearance from the scene will follow'.

How dangerously wrong this analysis was is now only too painfully clear. Since 15 September Fascism has been growing more aggressive and stronger day by day. Not a day passes even in Berlin, where the Communist Party got its biggest vote in the last elections, when the Fascists do not make a murderous

attack on Communists or Social-Democratic workers. In every local election held since September, the Fascists have made terrific gains. Look at the very recent Bremen municipal elections swept by the Fascists. The best brains of the old military machine are directing the Fascist operations. The most virile forces of the monarchists are their guiding hands. The heavily laden gold sacks of the biggest trust capitalists fill their war chests. Planfully, and determinedly, Fascism is marching on in Germany. Let me cite but a few of the latest events which are the handwriting on the wall. The *Notverordnung* of last July, the 14 September election results and putting into force the Hindenburg dictatorship provisions of Article 48 – all of these are only points of advance towards open Fascist rule.

Fascism and War – against the Soviet Union

In some circles – unfortunately especially in the highest official councils of the Communist International – there is the illusion that once German Fascism wins, a war between French and German imperialism will follow over the revision of the Versailles Treaty. This is a terrible and dangerous illusion. The Fascists may still use certain bombastic phrases against French imperialism. But the moment they win is the moment they will come to terms with France. The French bankers will buy them, remove them as a source of opposition and make the Hitlerites the banner-bearers of a new unholy alliance against Bolshevism, against the Soviet Union. We must remember that in the event that Fascism does win, it will not be without terrifically bitter protracted resistance from millions of class-conscious workers in Germany. French money and military help will be badly needed by the Hitlerites. A deal will be made between the Hitlers and the Terdieus and Briands against the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics [*sic.*]. As evidence we need but cite the recent Hitler-Herve negotiations in which they pledged themselves to have France and Germany ‘save the world from Bolshevism’. The articles of Jules Sauerwein, the noted French journalist, bearing an official mark, gave the same plan. And most important of all is the Paris report by *Informatus* (20 December) to the *Bergwerkzeitung*, the highly influential organ of the Rhine-Westphalian industrialists, that the ‘Comité des Forges’, the governing body of French heavy industry and really of France itself, is prepared to have France get together with Germany, give it credit, close a commercial agreement and form an air-tight Franco-German military alliance.

A World Menace

For the workers of the world, the German events are of inestimable importance. A German Fascist victory means the smashing of the powerful Communist Party of Germany, the destruction of the mighty trade-union movement and labor organizations and consequently the opening of the free road through Germany for a united imperialist onslaught against the Soviet Union. For such a 'concession', French and British imperialism are prepared tomorrow to make any revision of the Young Plan and Versailles Pact. For this, the workers of the world would more than pay for it with their lives, with their blood, with their money – perhaps with the greatest victory they have ever won – the victorious proletarian revolution in Russia!

The whole question of the worldwide significance of the menace of German Fascism is forcefully and correctly placed by *Gegen den Strom* [*Against the Current*], the organ of the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition), when it says:

The question of whether the German labor movement will be trampled by Fascism, or march on, strengthened by the flames of the revolutionary mass struggles, is of the most far-reaching international significance. A victory for Fascist reaction in Germany would be a gigantic triumph for world reaction, would be an unheard of defeat for the whole fighting world proletariat, and above all an immeasurable menace to the victorious struggle of the heroic working class of the Soviet Union. A victorious struggle of the German working-class movement against Fascism would lend new momentum, new spirit and confidence, new energy to the entire international labor movement.

7. Jews in Russia – Negroes in USA: a Real Lesson from the Soviet Union⁹

Will Herberg

The Road to Real Emancipation!

Directly or indirectly, openly or covertly, in one form or another, this is the subject that is agitating all elements of the Negro people in this country. It is a subject to which history seems able to provide no clue, for what does history offer to the Negro except a dismal record of disappointment, deception and disillusionment! How many times has the Negro been 'saved' already – saved from heathenism by being turned into a slave, saved from slavery by being turned into a serf, saved from the 'debauchery of Reconstruction' (it is becoming fashionable to sneer at Reconstruction nowadays!) by being turned into a disfranchised half-a-man! Is it any wonder that the American Negro is a little suspicious of new dispensations and a little distrustful of new saviours?

Yet history cannot be rejected; it must be understood. History has some valuable lessons worthy of consideration. History can even offer the case of a people, once as oppressed and underprivileged as the Negro in America today, and yet at the present completely emancipated, standing on an equal plane with all others, in possession of all rights and privileges of a free people. Is not such a 'miracle' of history deserving of serious study?

We refer to the case of the Jews in Russia!

Russian Jews and American Negroes

Even the most superficial examination of the position of the Negroes in the USA and of the Jews in the old Tsarist Empire is enough to indicate some striking differences. In Tsarist Russia the Jews were in effect excluded from

⁹ *The Revolutionary Age*, 1 August 1931, p. 3.

agriculture and from the important branches of industry. In America, on the other hand, the Negroes are to be found overwhelmingly in agriculture and heavy industry – although in a semi-serf status in the one and in an inferior position in the other. In Russia the Jews were mostly small traders, artisans, intellectuals or *Luftmenschen* (people with no fixed occupation who lived more or less by their wits). In this country, the Negro bourgeoisie is very small, the petty bourgeoisie is relatively small, while the bulk of colored people is made up of peasants and wage-workers.

But these contrasts in economic circumstances are no more obvious than the similarities in social position. The Jew was concentrated (by law) in the 'pale' (the periphery of the Empire) and segregated (by law) in the ghetto – just as the Negro is concentrated in the South and in about half-a-dozen Northern cities and segregated (by law and custom) in the 'Negro quarter'. The Jew was regarded as 'racially' inferior, to be kept apart from the pure whites. The legal percent norm and similar 'educational' measures against the Jews in old Russia find their parallel in the discriminatory laws and customs restricting and limiting the education of the Negroes throughout a large part of the United States. The slight racial but very great religious distinction between the Jew and Russian is surely analogous to the slight religious but very great racial distinction between the Negro and the white. The Jews were deprived of all civil rights and excluded from political activity by law, the Negro was excluded by law and custom. And, finally, who can fail to see how exactly the Black Hundred organizations and the pogroms against the Jews are paralleled by the Ku Klux Klan and the lynching of Negroes?

The Fundamental Point of Similarity

But all of these comparisons are merely the external expression of the close analogy in *basic historical source* between the peculiar station of the Jews in the old Russian Empire, on the one hand, and the subject standing of the Negro in the USA on the other. Both essentially represent *pre-capitalist remnants* in the economic structure – in fact, definite pre-capitalist institutions. In Tsarist Russia the position of the Jews was really a survival of their general and typical status in medieval times – exclusion from productive activities, ostracism, segregation in ghettos, etc. In the same manner, the subjection of the Negroes in America is directly traceable to the semi-slave status of the Negro peasant in Southern agriculture and to the inferior position of the Negro proletarian in Northern industry. Just as the oppression of the Jews in Tsarist Russia was to be associated with the pre-capitalist condition of Russia as a whole, so is the

oppression of the Negroes in America to be associated with the incompleteness and distorted character of the bourgeois revolution which took place in the South after the Civil War and which left the Negro peasant in a substantially serf-like position. The fundamental point of historical similarity lies not in external resemblances in special conditions, but in the pre-capitalist character of the social status as a whole, in each case reflecting, *in specific form*, the profound incompleteness of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The caste status of the Jew in Tsarist Russia and the analogous status of the Negro in American society are both 'relics of feudalism'.

These pre-capitalist 'relics', upon which the subject position of both Jew and Negro is predicated, find a welcome place in the decaying structure of capitalism in its imperialist-monopolist epoch. 'The decaying bourgeoisie . . . supports everything that is backward, dying, and medieval . . .' (Lenin). The 'relics of feudalism' serve as *sources of super-profit* for the monopolist bourgeoisie as well as *points of support for its class domination*. The social subjection of oppressed nations, races, and peoples thus becomes an integral element of the bourgeois-imperialist system.

Class interests are directly transmuted into class ideology; this is a fundamental social mechanism. The specifically depressed status of the subject nation, race, or people – so advantageous to the ruling class from the viewpoint of economic profit and social power – is immediately transformed into the corresponding class ideology – racial (national) 'inferiority', antagonism, etc. Thus race (national) prejudice becomes an essential constituent of the class ideology of the ruling class. But 'the ruling ideas of any age are the ideas of its ruling class' (Marx). Race (national) prejudice develops into an element of the currently accepted social thought and is absorbed by the other classes of the population to the degree that they are 'backward', i.e. under the influence of the ruling class. Because the Russian peasants and many sections of the workmen were so backward, i.e., so much under the spiritual influence of the aristocracy and the church, they were so anti-Semitic. Because the American working class is so backward, i.e., so much under the spiritual influence of the bourgeoisie, it is so dominated by anti-Negro race prejudice!

How the 'Jewish Problem' was Solved

It was only a Marxist analysis along the above lines that enabled the proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union to solve the 'Jewish question' completely and definitely. The 'Jewish question' was not solved merely by general proclamations on the equality of all peoples, not even by the very necessary and

very effective state measures against manifestations of anti-Semitism in any form. *It was the radical extirpation of all pre-capitalist relations, followed by an equally radical extirpation of capitalist exploitation itself, that made possible this miracle.* Only the destruction of the economic basis can provide the possibility for the demolition of the superstructure.

The general process by which the Soviet power solved the 'Jewish question', i.e., destroyed the caste position of the Jews in Russia, may be briefly sketched as follows:

1. The demonstrative proclamation of the equality of all peoples coupled with the demonstrative abolition of all discriminatory laws and customs.
2. The imposition of severe penalties upon all manifestations of anti-Semitism or of national chauvinism in any form. Both of these steps were taken at the very birth of the Soviet Republic.
3. The initiation of a vigorous campaign of social re-education to root out all traces of national chauvinism (as a dangerous form of bourgeois ideology) from the minds of the working masses of the Soviet Union.
4. The systematic transformation of the economic position of the Jewish people with a view to destroying their pre-capitalist economic status upon which their subject social status was conditioned. This implied the planned transference of the Jewish masses from their petty-bourgeois circumstances into agriculture and big industry.

Solving the 'Negro Question'

What is the significance of all this for the American Negro? If we are to learn anything from the Soviet experience, then we must realize that the 'Negro question' in the United States can only be solved along broadly similar lines.

1. The demonstrative proclamation of the complete equality in every respect of the Negro people with the white, coupled with the demonstrative abolition of all discriminatory laws and customs in any form.
2. The imposition of severe penalties upon all signs of anti-Negro prejudice or 'white chauvinism' in any form. A special campaign to stamp out lynching, with the capital penalty for all those guilty of lynching (just as the capital penalty is applied in the USSR to all types of pogrom activities).
3. The initiation of a vigorous campaign of social re-education to root out all forms of race prejudice from the minds of the people of this country.
4. The systematic transformation of the economic position of the Negro people with a view to destroying their peculiar pre-capitalist economic status, by which their subject status is conditioned. This implies the radical eradica-

tion of tenancy, share-cropping, 'furnishing' and all other forms of semi-slave exploitation. A transformation of this sort can only be accomplished by breaking forever the power of the Southern landlords, by the nationalization of all land, and by the direct holding of the land by the users. Simultaneously there must take place the complete and thorough elimination of all elements of inferiority in the Negro's position in industry (equal pay for equal work, no discrimination in jobs, etc.)

All of these proposals represent merely the demands of consistent democracy. Not one single one of them is a specifically socialist demand – that is, not one that necessarily implies the socialization of all the means of production, etc. Yes, so anti-democratic has capitalism become in its period of decay, in the imperialist epoch, so organically bound up with everything that is outlived, reactionary or decadent, that the realization of these democratic demands *in the present historical period* is only possible through the overthrow of capitalist 'democracy', through the concentration of political power in the hands of the proletariat. Through such dialectical contradictions does history proceed that only the *dictatorship* of the proletariat can guarantee *democracy* for the masses and, for the first time, bring real democracy to the oppressed Negro people!

The shattering of the social power of the bourgeoisie and the elevation of the revolutionary proletariat to power will necessarily undermine the ideological power and prestige of the bourgeoisie and its class culture, thereby destroying the social power behind the poison of race prejudice. Race prejudice is an essential and organic element of American capitalist culture and in emancipating themselves from the bourgeoisie, the white American masses will at the same time emancipate themselves from the poisonous spiritual influence of their masters.

• • •

The 'Russian lessons' cannot be neglected or ignored by the American Negro in his search for the road to emancipation. Because they are not 'Russian' lessons; they are the lessons of history, the fruits of experience, the conclusions of a clear and realistic approach to the 'Negro problem' in America.

8. On General Line and Inner-Party Course of the CPSU: Resolution of the National Conference of the Communist Party of the USA (Opposition), September 1932¹⁰

1. The present schisms in the Communist International, the urgent need to rally all forces for a defense of the Soviet Union, the valuable lessons in the Soviet experiences for the workers of the rest of the world, make a constructive, non-factional consideration of the 'Russian question' essential.

2. When the Communist Party (Majority Group) was organized, we made it quite clear that 'our struggle has never been nor can it be an appendix to any individual group in the CPSU... While we have always condemned the anti-Bolshevik methods used by the Stalin leadership in the struggle against comrade Bukharin on the Russian question, our struggle has never been based upon or associated with the line of comrade Bukharin on these questions... Our struggle is based exclusively upon the task of overcoming the present crisis in the Comintern and of restoring it an our Party to a Leninist line'.¹¹ From the very first we supported wholeheartedly the general policies of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for the quickest possible extension of the socialist base of the Soviet economy as the only decisive method of rapidly strengthening the forces of the proletarian revolution for its struggle against its capitalist enemies from within and from without. At our National Conference (4–6 July 1930) we reaffirmed this attitude and hailed the tremendous progress made by the Soviet Union in socialist construction through the Five-Year Plan – 'in heavy industrialization and in the collectivization of agriculture at an accelerated tempo – despite the hostility of all the imperialist powers'.

¹⁰ *Workers Age*, 15 November 1932, p. 6.

¹¹ Statement of the National Council of the CP Majority Group, *Revolutionary Age*, 15 December 1929.

3. But while our general attitude was clearly formulated, our lack of an extensive and objective examination of the general line and inner-Party course of the CPSU has become more and more obvious. Such an examination is today impossible in the official Party, which subordinates everything to its factional necessities and to an abject subservience to the faction now dominating the Comintern. Nor is this possible among the Trotskyites, whose conceptions on 'Russian questions' are rooted in their anti-Communist estimation of the class basis of the Soviet power ('Thermidor') and in their non-Leninist views on the question of 'socialism in one country'. The resolution which follows, while it can only be general and limited to the most essential points, is therefore very timely.

1 **Historical Estimate of the Five-Year Plan**

4. A planned economy is an inherent feature of socialist construction. Though the beginnings of a planned economy and substantial progress in economic construction were made before the Five-Year Plan was adopted, it is a fact that the Five-Year Plan represents the most systematic, the highest and most concentrated form of planned economy hitherto applied in the Soviet Union. The Five-Year Plan marks the transition of the period of reconstruction to that of socialist construction; it is the first general, all-embracing plan of socialist construction in the USSR (previous plans were either plans of reconstruction or else were plans of limited scope.)

5. We regard the Five-Year Plan as the most effective program for hastening the completion of another stage in the development of socialist construction in the USSR – the extension of the socialist revolution to the agricultural front (collectivization) and the rapid development of heavy industries (industrialization).

6. The class relations in the USSR proper, the fact that the USSR is today the only workers' and peasants' Soviet Republic, the growing danger of a concentrated imperialist attack against the Soviet Union, all these factors make imperative the speediest development of heavy industry and the maximum tempo in the collectivization of agriculture, as the basic foundation of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. A necessary and unavoidable result of this tempo is the sharpening of the class struggle in the USSR and the organization of a war to the finish to wipe out the kulaks as a class. This, however, must not be confused with the Trotskyist proposals, which would have broken the bond with the middle peasants, who must not be abandoned to the leadership of the kulaks.

7. The successful and sound application of the Five-Year Plan adopted at the Fifteenth Party Congress of the CPSU [2–19 December 1927] requires a constant

examination and re-examination of the progress of the plan as a whole and of the achievements in agriculture in relation to industry and in one industry in relation to another. The maximum tempo of production, the highest quality of goods, with the simultaneous lowering of prices, the constant improvement of the income and working conditions of the laboring masses, can be assured only if approached from this angle.

8. In view of the extremely great difficulties under which socialist construction is proceeding in the USSR, considerable temporary strain and sacrifice by the Soviet masses is inevitable. In the light of the present international situation, the cost of the Five-Year Plan in money and momentary social hardship, is entirely worthwhile and imperative. The howling of the world bourgeoisie about the suffering of the Soviet masses because of the Five-Year Plan is only a smokescreen to hide the infinitely deeper and utterly useless suffering of the exploited masses in the capitalist countries and is an essential part of the preparations for imperialist attacks against the Soviet Union. The economic and social burdens temporarily borne by the Soviet masses in their speediest completion of the Five-Year Plan of socialist construction (for the toilers), are petty and insignificant when compared with the heavy price in life and limb and in pounds and dollars paid by the toiling masses in the urban and rural areas in the development of modern industry (for the exploiters) under capitalism (conditions in countries like England, Germany, and the United States). Witness the terrific price paid by the British working and peasant masses for the industrial revolution in England, for the development of scientific management and mass production in the US (the expropriation of the peasantry, child labor, long hours, low wages, wretched working conditions, etc. in England and life-sapping speed-up, a notorious spy system, murderous accident rates, and huge permanent unemployment and starvation, etc. in the US). Even today in the midst of the fulfilment of the Five-Year Plan, in the midst of all the hardships of building large-scale industry and collectivizing agriculture, the Soviet Union is able to guarantee to every worker a job, decent living conditions, and full social insurance. On the other hand, with all its gigantic industries and terrific productive capacities, capitalism everywhere brings only mass misery, huge unemployment, and unlimited sacrifices for the workers. The hardships of the workers in the Soviet Union are due to the temporary strain in the speeded building of socialist industry. The untold difficulties and misery of the workers under capitalism are due to the whole system of exploitation, are permanent so long as capitalism exists.

In this sense we may say categorically that the many difficulties faced (and the mistakes made) by the CPSU are to be associated with the upbuilding of socialism, with the extension of the proletarian revolution and with the

strengthening of the victory won by the international working class in general and the Russian proletariat in particular in the November Revolution.

2 Inner-Party Course and Socialist Construction

g. The most successful completion of the viewpoint of the inner-Party course of the Five-Year Plan requires from the CPSU the following:

(a) The greatest unity in the ranks of the CPSU – leadership as well as membership.

(b) The systematic development of a genuine collective leadership in the CPSU.

(c) A systematic, earnest effort to lay the basis for constantly extending Party democracy in the CPSU.

(d) The development of an attitude of thoroughgoing Leninist self-criticism in the ranks of the entire CPSU – leadership as well as membership.

(e) A merciless struggle against bureaucratism no matter where it manifests itself – even if it be in the highest committees of the Party or Soviet apparatus.

(f) The Party must wage a ruthless war on all expressions of enemy class pressure through the CPSU. Such pressure is, in a measure, inevitable under conditions of the proletarian dictatorship where the CP is the only existing political party. But never for a moment must Communist proposals, discussion or criticism be stifled by the false demagogic raising of a cry of ‘enemy class viewpoints’ as has been done by Trotsky against Stalin and Bukharin and by Stalin against Bukharin. Practical questions, like those of the balance between one industry and another, between, let us say, transportation and mining, can only be discussed in an atmosphere of mutual confidence, practicality and sober analysis of facts and situations. Name-calling and abuse can only serve to becloud the issues and endanger the wisdom of the decision – as happened in the factional abuse which met the viewpoints expressed in ‘Notes of an Economist’.¹²

(g) Unity of the Communist International, the vanguard of the international working class, the basic and main line of defense of the Soviet Union in the capitalist countries.

(h) It is not only desirable but also necessary for the Communists of all countries to take a constant, deep interest in the problems, difficulties, and successes of our Russian comrades in their tasks of constructing socialism. It

¹² Bukharin 1982, pp. 301–30.

is the duty of all sections of the CI to help our Soviet brothers in their historic work as contractors of socialist construction. This requires a constructively critical attitude on the part of the non-Russian comrades towards the achievements and mistakes of the CPSU.

(i) A new relationship in the CI, whereby the CPSU will be the leading Party, the first among equals, in the Comintern, and not the sole dominating force. The CI must have a genuinely collective international leadership.

3 The Inner-Party Course of the CPSU

10. While it is not only the right but also the duty of all sections of the CI to advise and criticise the policies and leadership of the CPSU, still we cannot emphasise too strongly the fact that this criticism must be only positive and constructive. Otherwise the criticism would be harmful to our Russian comrades engaged in socialist construction under a state of virtual military siege and economic blockade by the imperialist powers.

11. The general line of the CPSU for socialist construction in the USSR is correct. In the present Party regime, however, we find a number of errors. Among these, the main ones are: (a) the narrowing of inner-Party democracy, a factional attitude towards criticism and suggestions – aggravating differences instead of settling them, hindering the spirit of genuine self-criticism and initiative – mechanical control and bureaucratism; (b) the narrowing of leadership within the Party; (c) the development of an odious anti-Leninist ‘herocult’; (d) the use of factional methods in carrying out the Five-Year Plan (as, for example, in connection with the March 1930 retreat in which the system of scapegoats was used to hide the scrapping of the tendencies to revise the line of the Fifteenth Congress in the direction of Trotskyism).

12. While making the above criticism of the present Party regime, we reject unreservedly the proposals of the Trotskyites and others for so-called ‘unlimited, formal democracy’ and the secret ballot in the CPSU.

Regardless of the criticism which may be made of some of the methods of the Party leadership in the CPSU, the defense of the Soviet Union, as the only fatherland of the workers of every land, is the absolute and unquestionable duty of all Communists at all costs. Our energetic fight for world-Communist unity and a Leninist tactical line is an integral part of our struggle to best prepare the greatest masses to defend successfully the socialist fatherland against the growing danger of imperialist war. Only such criticism can or should be made as will help the Party to strengthen itself and to strengthen the will of the workers of the world to defend the workers’ republic.

4 The Crisis in the Comintern and the Situation in the CPSU

13. In rejecting all opposition to the general line of the CPSU we again reject all efforts to make our group a tail to the kite of any CPSU group. Nor has our endorsement of the general line of the CPSU on socialist construction meant that we were taking steps to travel in the direction of becoming a tail to the kite of the present dominant group in the CPSU, or that we have in any way at all blurred or weakened our struggle against the utterly false tactical line of the ECCI.

14. The basic cause of the crisis in the Comintern is to be found in the gap that has developed between the victorious proletarian revolution and the steady development of socialism in the USSR, on the one hand, and the 'retarded' development of the proletarian revolution in the capitalist world on the other. The existence of the gap makes especially imperative the development of an international collective leadership reflecting the world-Communist movement as a whole. In such a world leadership the CPSU would naturally assume the role of first among equals. Yet, in actual fact, the leadership of the Comintern today lies exclusively in the hands of the CPSU, which exercises a monopoly of leadership. It is this narrow, non-internationalist and non-collective method and system of leadership that has led to the failure of the leadership of the Comintern to reflect the world-Communist movement as a whole; it has led to the system whereby estimates, methods, and slogans derived from the conditions in a land in which the workers rule are mechanically transplanted in countries where the proletarian revolution is still in the making.

15. Precisely because of the gap between the conditions in the Soviet Union and the conditions in the capitalist world, the difficulties in the Comintern do not manifest themselves in the same form in the CPSU as they do in the communist parties of the capitalist countries; neither the political issues nor the factional groupings are the same. It therefore shows a completely false understanding of the sources of the present crisis in the Communist International to conclude that, because the present leadership of the CPSU is primarily responsible for the false course of the CI, therefore the general line of the CPSU in socialist construction must necessarily be wrong. Nor would it be correct to assume that because the general line of the CPSU in socialist construction is correct, therefore the line of the CI dominated by the CPSU leadership must necessarily be correct. To reason in this way would be guilty of the Stalinist and Trotskyist methods of mechanical transference of problems, struggles and groupings from the CPSU to the parties of the capitalist world.

16. Though the crisis in the Comintern did not arise out of any differences over the Five-Year Plan or over the general problems of socialist construction,

still the 'Russian question' is of immeasurable importance for the entire International Communist Opposition. Improvement in the regime and inner-Party course in the CPSU will certainly hasten improvement in the CI and vice versa.

5 Conclusion

17. The Communist Opposition must pay the greatest attention to the experiences and achievements of our brother-Party in the USSR. Our participation in working out the problems of the Soviet Party cannot take the form of the official Party leadership 'endorsing' blindly, without comprehension and without examination, everything that bears the official stamp. We must have a positive and constructive attitude, truly critical in the Leninist sense, towards the policies of the CPSU, just as towards the policies of every other section of the Comintern and towards the leadership of the Comintern itself.

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Bound together as we are in agreement over the fundamental principles of Leninism (proletarian dictatorship, Soviet power, armed insurrection, etc.), we must approach all our tactical problems and the settlement of all our tactical differences only in such a manner as will ensure the speediest unification and reconstruction of the world Party of Communism into that force which will lead the international proletariat to the overthrow of the capitalist system and the building of socialism on a world scale.

Blind, mechanical loyalty is not Communist loyalty. The attitude that the CI leadership as such can never make a mistake is false and dangerous. It makes impossible serious self-criticism on an international scale. It makes impossible the development of a genuine, international collective leadership and only fosters a system of puppet leadership in every section.

All decisions of the CI arrived at through party democracy must be carried out by all comrades whether they agree or disagree. At the same time, all decisions must be subject to constant critical evaluation. Leninist self-criticism must be applied to the CI leadership and not merely to its various sections. Mistakes made by the leadership of the CI should be as frankly admitted and as promptly corrected as mistakes by any section.

This is the only healthy Leninist basis for the CI to grow into a victorious world Party of the working class. This is the only basis on which the CI can grow and secure the victorious defense of the Soviet Union and the victory of the international working class.

9. The Nazis Take Power – Now What?¹³

Jay Lovestone

Hitler's rise to the chancellorship of Germany is not an ordinary change of cabinets or shift of cabinet-portfolios. It marks the beginning of a change of political systems. With Hitler's assumption of chancellorship the world witnessed the first decisive and open step of German trust capital to replace the broken-down parliamentary-democratic system with an uncamouflaged brutal bourgeois dictatorship – a Fascist dictatorship.

The Breakup of a System

When the Catholic Brüning succeeded the Social Democrat, Müller, it meant a change of cabinets, a very important development in the decay of parliamentary democracy. When Papen displaced Brüning and Schleicher succeeded Papen, it marked extraordinary cabinet changes and a headlong move towards the breakup of the bourgeois-republican system.

It is true, history is not made in a day. But there are days on which history is made. July 20, 1932 is one of those days. It was on this day that the Socialist-Catholic Cabinet of Prussia was yanked out by a corporal and two men of the *Reichswehr*. The failure of the working class to take any steps to resist and paralyse this Junker-militarist *coup d'état* meant a mortal blow against the republic and made almost inevitable all the events which followed subsequently.

Today Germany lives under a Fascist dictatorship. From the viewpoint of even the most elementary prerequisites of capitalist democracy, the March 5 elections will be a grim farce. After the election, the parade of parties is over in Germany. From what I have seen of German Fascism, I am convinced that, unless the working class really closes its ranks and presents a united front against Fascism, the Nazi dictatorship will, in a few months, do as much damage to the German labor movement as it took Mussolini a couple of years. And

13 *Workers Age*, 15 February 1933, pp. 3, 7.

this is so despite the fact that the German proletariat is much better trained and organized than the Italian was when Mussolini's Black Shirts swooped down on Rome.

To us, the International Communist Opposition, Hitler's rise to power comes as no surprise. Already in 1928, the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition) warned of the Fascist menace and proposed a practical program of revolutionary activity to make impossible a Fascist dictatorship in Germany. For this, our German comrades were roundly denounced by the official-Communist leadership (Thälmann-Neumann). The latter ridiculed the menace of Fascism and estimated every successive Fascist victory as a 'high water-mark' of Hitlerism. The official CP hailed every one of its own parliamentary advances as 'iron rings around Fascism'. The Social Democrats swung from Hindenburg and the Supreme Court to General von Schleicher as saviours of German 'democracy and Socialism' from the Fascist sweep.

False Prophecies

The liberals and bourgeois democrats throughout the world simply sneered at Hitler and said that such an 'emotionally unstable' person could never become the leader of that great cultured country, Germany. All together they hailed every momentary recession of the Fascist wave, every difficulty within the Fascist movement, as the 'collapse' and the 'total disintegration' of the Nazi party. These people, basing their analysis on temporary and superficial phenomena, concluded that the republic was invincible, that the waves of Hitlerism were broken on that rock of 'pure German democracy' – Field-Marshal von Hindenburg.

How wrong such conclusions were is now obvious. The fact of the matter is that the parliamentary results have for some time played a secondary role in German class relations. For some time it is the extra-parliamentary moves which have become decisive. Why is it that Hitler was called in to become Chancellor after a series of setbacks in Reichstag, provincial, and communal elections? Why is it that, even after the serious crisis in the Fascist party occasioned by the defection of Gregor Strasser, Hitler's ablest lieutenant, the German bourgeoisie could do nothing else but entrust Hitler, that is, the Nazi party, with decisive power, with the dominant position?

The answer to these questions is to be found in the changing class relations in Germany. Capitalism in Germany, with all its high technique, has reached a most critical stage of disequilibrium. Papen's much heralded economic program, Schleicher's much advertised 'settlement scheme', failed dismally not

only to allay working-class unrest but failed even to lessen the sharpening conflict of interests between the East-Prussian landowners, the Junkers, and the biggest trust-capitalists. The Junker-militarist clique, which seized power in Germany through the Papen *coup d'état*, could not bring about either economic equilibrium or a balanced relationship between the powerful agrarian groups and the Ruhr and Rhineland industrialists and financiers.

Fascism to the Rescue

The sentiment for Communism was rising. The economic situation was worsening. The conflicts in the ruling section of the German governing class assumed ugly proportions. Clearly there was only one thing left for the German top bourgeoisie to do, and that was to apply its very last remedy to stave off disaster and social revolution – the introduction of Fascism. This meant that both the wealthy landowners and the heavy industrialists would be satisfied at the expense of further attacks on the masses. But these attacks could not be made only with the *Reichswehr* bayonets. To launch such a bloody offensive against the toiling masses of Germany meant that the *Reichswehr* bayonets would have to be supported by and rest up on a huge mass base. Only the Nazis could supply such a mass base and the proud aristocrats would have to play second fiddle to the Nazis whom they but yesterday called ‘upstarts’ and ‘rowdies’. Thus came the reestablishment of the ultra-reactionary Harzburg front, that is, the Nazi-Nationalist (Hitler-Hugenburg) bloc and the installation of a Fascist regime. It is only with such mass support that the German bourgeoisie could continue to rule today, could attempt to extend the life of capitalism through further assaults on the standards of the working class.

A Major Defeat!

No one can exaggerate the historical significance of the victory of Fascism in Germany. Germany is the key to continental Europe. The working class of the world and not merely the German proletariat have suffered a major and disastrous defeat. The Communist International and the entire international proletariat are now paying a heavy price of years of ruinous sectarian tactics hidden by occasional, really insignificant victories in Germany. Great thanks must, of course, first of all be paid to the treacherous role of the German Social Democracy. For the Communist International the crisis within its ranks assumes new and most serious proportions. We are in danger of facing a

situation in which the Comintern will not have a single mass party in the entire capitalist world. We are on the eve of days which will bring staggering blows to the international working class through the annihilation of the German labor movement, the trade unions, political parties, cooperatives and all social and cultural institutions of the working class. For the Soviet Union the danger of war assumes most menacing proportions, not so much in the sense of an immediate German military onslaught as rather in the growing probability of Fascist Germany becoming the spearhead of a worldwide imperialist drive against the USSR.

We sounded the alarm call against Fascism before. We cannot sound it too often. There is still a probability of beating back Fascism, which has so far been victorious. The Communist Party of Germany and the Social Democratic Party of Germany must establish a real working-class united front. Together, both organizations must work out a plan for immediate preparation for an effective general political strike. This means the unemployed will have to be organized for a thorough cooperation with the employed and organized workers. This means that the Social-Democratic Party will have to drop all reliance on Hindenburg, all faith in the Supreme Court and all hopes in the Schleichers, Brünings, and high *Reichswehr* officers. This means that the official Communists will have to drop completely their union-splitting policies and take every possible step to hasten the return of all militants to the free trade unions, to liquidate the special Communist unions organized in the so-called 'red trade-union movement'. There must be established a unified anti-Fascist defense organization. Finally, in the coming elections, the Communist and Social-Democratic parties should arrive at an agreement to put up one working-class ticket, a unified proletarian front, an election bloc of the proletariat against the Fascist terror-regime.

Only such thoroughgoing cooperation between the Communist and Social-Democratic parties, only the building of a broad and honest united front of the proletariat in Germany can even, at this late hour, hold out the hope and the probability of success in dealing a death-blow to the Fascist dictatorship in Germany.

10. On the New Line of the Comintern: Letter to the Central Committee and Members of the Communist Party of the United States¹⁴

Dear Comrades,

Profound changes are taking place in the line of the Communist International. These changes affect some of the most fundamental issues that have separated the official Communist Party and the Communist Opposition: the united front; the attitude towards the Socialist Party; the trade-union question.

United Front in France

In France, there is a united front of Socialist and Communist parties such as we have been advocating for years and which we were denounced for advocating. The united front, despite serious opportunist errors (the non-aggression pact), has strengthened the fighting forces of the proletariat.

Liquidation of Red Unions in Germany

In Germany, the Central Committee of the Communist Party has instructed its members to drop the ill-fated theory of social fascism. It has entered into a bloc with the Communist Opposition and a united front with the Social-Democratic underground groups, for the joint building of class trade unions. It has declared itself ready to liquidate the red trade unions and the RGO¹⁵ (corresponding to the TUUL in America) and pledged itself not to try to split the class unions to form new 'Red Unions'. In short, it has adopted the main

¹⁴ *Workers Age*, 1 October 1934, pp. 2, 7, reprinted as a four-page leaflet.

¹⁵ *Editors' note: Rote Gewerkschaftsopposition.*

outlines of the tactical views of the Communist Opposition in Germany on the united-front and trade union questions.

More important still, having adopted the trade-union line of the Communist Opposition, the official Party in Germany found it necessary to confer with the Communist Opposition, which has not only advocated but taken the lead in building underground non-partisan, class trade unions in Germany!

CPG Confers with 'Brandlerites'

Yes, comrades, two representatives of the German Central Committee have had official discussions with the two outstanding leaders of the German Communist Opposition, with those two leaders whom you have been taught to hate (without knowing anything about them), with those two leaders who were denounced as 'renegades', as 'counterrevolutionists', as 'paid agents of Hitler' – *and the conferences have resulted in an agreement for united work.*

The Communist Party of Germany and the Communist Party of Germany (Opposition) have agreed to work together in the building of underground class trade unions, to work together in developing a united front with the Social Democracy. The Communist Party and the Communist Opposition have further agreed '*to cooperate in the preparation of mass actions and to form organs of joint struggle all over the country for this purpose.*'

A Step Towards Communist Unity

Comrades, this will be gladdening news to all who value the unity of the working class and the unity of the Communist movement. This agreement on such important tactical questions, and this comradely collaboration in struggle, are important steps which should lead to the elimination of further differences and to the eventual reuniting of the Communist movement.

Changes in Many Lands

There are many other signs of a correcting of the fatal sectarian line which has been handicapping the growth and effectiveness of the Communist International and its sections.

In England the party is proposing a united front to the Labour Party and is taking steps to lead the Scottish 'red' miners' union back into the general miners' union.

In Austria the united front policy the Communist Opposition has been fighting for has been adopted, and the Party and the fighting force of the workers are growing by leaps and bounds.

There are important changes in the tactical line in *Belgium, Italy, Spain, Denmark, Czechoslovakia* and a number of other countries.

What of the United States?

Even in the United States there are faint beginnings of the abandonment of the sectarian tactics of the so-called 'united front from below' and of dual unionism.

In the past, the party leaders worked overtime to convince the party membership that our proposals in that direction were 'opportunist', 'left social-fascist', even 'counter-revolutionary'. Now they are trying to make a few little changes in accordance with the changing line of the Comintern – half-hearted, reluctant, piecemeal change. The changes are not a result of discussion by the party membership. There is no frank acknowledgement of error. No explanation is offered as to why the old sectarian line is being abandoned. No pledge is given to the working class that it will be abandoned for good. There is no honest, thoroughgoing correction of the line. *A party of democratic centralism changing its basic tactical line without discussion or decision by, and re-education of, the membership! A party of the masses trying to change its line for mass work in the dark, by diplomacy, behind the back of the masses!* This was not Lenin's way of correcting an error, of re-educating the Party, of regaining the confidence of the masses. No real change can be made in such fashion. No guarantee against new errors can be given by such methods.

Is it not high time that the Party tackled not only the errors, but the roots from which the errors sprang – the lack of inner-Party democracy; the expulsion of those who tried to criticise the sectarian line within the framework of democratic centralism; the handing down of all decisions from above, *with discussion only as to have to carry them out*; the mechanical transference of tactics and 'left' and 'right' turns appropriate to the Soviet Union to all other countries without consideration of the differing objective conditions?

The Seventh World Congress

The seventh World Congress [of the Comintern], four years overdue, has just been postponed again. It has been postponed, no doubt, to make room for further changes in the line of the various parties. Comrades, this should give an

opportunity for real discussion in the various sections so that the decision of the Congress may come as a result of genuine collective discussion and decision by the various parties.

Comrades, ask for, demand (it is your right and duty as Communists) that a discussion of the sectarian line and errors of the past five years precede the Seventh World Congress. Discuss the 'new' line (we put 'new' in quotation marks because it is really a return to the old Leninist line that was abandoned at the time of our expulsion).

What is the 'New' Line?

You will be told by party leaders, who approach these changes factionally that: (1) There is no change of line, and (2) that the sectarian line was correct up to now and is changing 'because of changing objective conditions'.

Comrades, is it not significant that as the situation becomes more and more acute, as fascism spreads and the war danger increases, as the masses become more radicalised and mass resistance grows, that at this time the Communist parties and the Communist International find it necessary to turn more and more seriously towards the tactics they denounce as 'less radical'? These tactics (united fronts between organizations; trade union unity; building the mass unions and winning them for militant policies in place of splitting them) have been condemned as opportunist, as not appropriate to the 'Third Period' and the revolutionary upsurge of the masses. But when a real sharpening of the situation begins, when the masses begin to move and show signs of radicalization on an unparalleled scale, the party leaderships are forced to drop the denunciation of these proposals and are compelled to adopt the tactics they have been condemning.

What of Communist Unity?

Comrades, we do not address this letter to you in any we-told-you-so tone, we call these facts to your attention in the spirit of comradeship, for the sake of the effective correction of the Party line, for the sake of bringing closer the day of unity of all Communist forces within the Communist Party and the Communist International.

We of the Communist Opposition have always been for Communist unity. Despite all the sharpness of the attacks of the Party leaders against us, despite all the shameful, incredible abuse, despite name-calling, physical attack, the breaking up of many of our meetings and the unscrupulous misrepresentation

of our views and activities, *we have never for a moment abandoned our goal of reuniting our party*. Now the differences between the two tendencies begin to diminish and the day of Communist unity is thereby brought closer.

The Burning Need for Unity

Now more than ever is there a need for Communist unity. The ever-present, ever-growing war danger, the threat of spreading fascism, the widespread mass misery, the leftward movement in the ranks of the Socialist Party, the great wave of strike struggles all make Communist unity a burning necessity. No one who is loyal to the interests of the Communist movement can oppose efforts for reuniting the Party.

What Stands in the Way?

Comrades, what now stands in the way of Party unity? Do you not see that the slanders against the German opposition as ‘agents of the bourgeoisie’ must have been false if there can now be a bloc between the German Party and the Communist Party Opposition *for joint mass struggles against German capitalism and fascism*? Do you not see that the slander against our united-front and trade union tactics must have been false if they can now be adopted?

For over five years, the Party and Comintern leadership have been predicting our degeneration, our going over to Social Democracy or the bourgeoisie. How much longer will this desperate unCommunist game of expulsion, name-calling, and factional abuse be kept up as a substitute for the comradely discussion of differences? Does it now become more and more vile and unworthy, more and more unprincipled, now that the differences begin to diminish? Is it not clear that the *Communist Opposition and the official Party are bound together by the unbreakable bonds of common Communist principles*? No differences on the tactical application of these principles, no amount of factional abuse, have been able to alter or conceal that fact.

What is Needed?

We do not wish to minimise our tactical differences. They are beginning to diminish, yet they are still great. But we are convinced that a genuine party discussion, an honest, thorough, comradely analysis of the errors of the last five years, will clear up the reasons for the Party’s failure to achieve substantial

growth during such favorable years, will remove all differences, will correct our Party's line and guarantee its correctness, unity, and growth for the future.

Time to Act

Comrades, we call upon all Party members to discuss the questions we have raised here. You have the right to know what is happening in the Communist International. You have the right to know why the line is being changed. It is your duty to discuss and evaluate and help to make the changes of line that are beginning. It is your duty to extend these changes to this country. *This time they must be the result of a genuine collective discussion*, in preparation for the seventh World Congress. That congress must complete the correction of the line. It must restore Communist unity. It must restore Party democracy and collective leadership.

We Have Elected Delegates

The International Communist Opposition has requested the right to send fraternal delegates from its various sections to the Seventh World Congress, to discuss joint work and lay the base for unity. See to it that the American Communist Party endorses the request to admit fraternal delegates from the American Communist Opposition to that congress. It will hasten the day of unity and the forward march of our movement.

For a healthy tactical line!
For the end of sectarianism!
For the restoration of Party democracy!
For a united Communist Party!
For international collective leadership!
For a united Communist International!

Communist Party of the United States (Opposition)
(Section of the International Communist Opposition)

11. Soviet Foreign Policy and the World Revolution¹⁶

Jay Lovestone

1 What's Behind Soviet Foreign Policy?

Why the problem of Soviet foreign policy has been provoking so much heart-searching and brain-racking in the labor movement is easily understandable. Here is a question which mirrors the international situation in all its phases and complications: the transitory relationship between the USSR and the capitalist world, the antagonisms among the imperialist powers, the complexities of the struggle of the international working class and the oppressed peoples.

Several recent developments of paramount import have only underscored the vital significance of this problem. These are: the change of policy towards the Soviet Union by the US government – the last of the major powers to drop non-recognition as a method of expressing its disapproval of the Soviet Republic – the aggravated menace of an attack against the Soviet Union through the open intensive war preparations of Japan and the German-Polish bloc; the remarkable progress achieved by the USSR in socialist construction; the consequently enhanced economic power and military efficacy of the Soviets leading it to play a new role in world affairs (entry into the League of Nations, the Franco-Soviet pact of mutual assistance, etc.), and the continued grave crisis in the Communist International.

It is in this concrete situation that Soviet diplomacy must be examined, that Soviet foreign policy must be treated. It is this background of events that has caused some serious-minded bourgeois students of Soviet affairs to pose what appears to them the following paradox: 'Why is it that the Russian Bolsheviks with their concept of the present period as one of wars and revolutions should, nevertheless, have such a strong desire to prolong the equilibrium of peace and to stop war?' This cultured correspondent evidently could not comprehend the marked contrast between the May Day Manifesto of the Comintern

16 Lovestone 1936, pp. 3–21, 24–31.

and a statement by Soviet ambassador Potemkin in Paris urging an Eastern pact for peace.

The confusion pervading the approach of some to this whole question is brought home to use in the following remarks of Professor Edgar S. Furniss: 'To conclude with a capitalist state a pact that is so much like an old-style military alliance represents a complete reversal of the original Bolshevik foreign policy as derived from the tenets of communism'.¹⁷ Then, in the same vein, some self-acknowledged 'pure revolutionists' (Trotskyites) mix malice with their 'analysis' and condemn Soviet policy as an outright betrayal of the world revolution. Others, recently converted back – from Communism to Social Democracy – are especially bitter against the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) every time the USSR skillfully utilizes the conflict between the imperialist powers for delaying or avoiding aggression against the Soviet Union. Of course, in repudiating such malignant distorters, we only emphasise our conviction that honest and constructive criticism of specific phases of Soviet foreign policy in the ranks of the workers is undeserving of abuse, that it is appropriate and welcome.

Too many look upon foreign policy as something abstract, as intergovernmental relations in a vacuum, without regard for the class basis of the states involved. Likewise, too many conceive Bolshevik foreign policy merely as affairs arranged by Soviet diplomats, the exchange of notes, or the conclusion of diplomatic, commercial or military treaties. Such an approach is totally inadequate, is false from beginning to end. To the sole working-class government, the USSR, surrounded by a world of enemies, foreign policy has always been only the strategy and tactics pursued by the proletarian dictatorship in its relations with imperialist and non-Soviet countries. Viewed in this light, Soviet foreign policy cannot be imperialist; it involves nothing but the strategy of finding the most effective steps in its inter-government relations for the purpose of securing the defense and strengthening of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state and, therefore, as the base of the international labor movement, the base of the world revolution.

Thus we must realize as axiomatic the following:

1. Due to the fact that the proletariat has not yet won power in any country but Russia, the working-class government of the USSR must reckon on living in peace and having economic and political relations with the capitalist ruling classes. The protraction of this truce until the proletariat of some other countries take power is conducive to the maintenance of power in the hands of the already victorious section of the international movement (the Russian section).

17 *Current History*, May 1935.

2. The Soviet Union must utilize and exploit the differences among the imperialist powers in the interest of the proletarian power, especially because it is surrounded by a world of enemies.

3. The state-form of the capitalist ruling class dominating any particular country does not determine its relations with the Soviet Union or the policy of the USSR towards it. Italy, with its Fascist form of capitalist dictatorship, was among the first to establish normal relations with the Soviet Union. The British bourgeoisie, with its constitutional monarchy, was not among the first. The US, with its much-vaunted republican form of capitalist state-power, was, until recently, vigorously opposed even to recognizing the Soviet Republic.

For that matter, nor does the form of capitalist state determine the foreign policies of any one bourgeois government to any other. It is the economic and political interests, under given conditions, that are decisive. It is not improbable that the next war will be fought in the name of 'democracy' against Fascism – or of 'peace' against war. It is furthermore probable that amongst the best bombing-planes on the side of capitalist democracy will be Mussolini's squadrons. In the welter of the conflict of economic and political interests, the exact form of the capitalist dictatorship does not count, is immaterial. Obviously, the Soviet government, in its relations with capitalist powers, cannot fail to face reality – must not base its relations on the non-existent.

4. In formulating policies in its foreign relations, the Soviet government must resort to constant adaption – adjustment and readjustment – to the concrete conditions prevailing at any particular moment. Capitalist powers 'friendly' to the Soviet Union yesterday are potentially its sworn enemies of tomorrow. And its active enemies of yesterday may become the passive and unreliable friends of today, tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow!

5. The economic and military strength of the Soviet Union, at any particular moment, in comparison with the economic and military strength or weakness of the capitalist powers involved, determines the character of the treaties the USSR is able to secure with its frigid friends or its fiery foes.

Measured with these yardsticks, it is not difficult to gauge accurately the change of German bourgeois policy towards the Soviet Union, from the friendly days of Rapallo [the Rapallo treaty] to the hostile days of Hitler; the turn in American policy from Wilson's military intervention to Roosevelt's recognition; the recent change of front by France and Czecho-Slovakia, from military intervention to limited mutual assistance, etc.

An examination of the various periods of Soviet foreign policy confirms the soundness of our approach. In general the history of Soviet foreign policy may be thus divided:

1. First came the era of military intervention lasting approximately from 1917 to 1922. These were likewise the days of open, frontal revolutionary struggle

against the capitalist regimes of various countries (the Baltic States, Bavaria, Germany, Hungary, Italy etc.). At this time no major power accorded *de jure* or *de facto* recognition to the Soviet government. Estonia sort of broke the ice by signing the Treaty of Tartu with the Soviet Republic.

2. The period of negotiations and recognition after the Russian proletariat, with the aid of the labor movement in Western Europe, had defeated the White Guards and their foreign allies in the armies of intervention. The years 1922–6 witnessed the recognition of the Soviets by most of the big capitalist powers after prolonged negotiations. The Treaty of Tartu, the basis of which was laid down by Lenin, served as the model for the Bolshevik government.

3. A whole series of diplomatic difficulties and ruptures characterised the USSR's foreign relations during 1927–32. The relations with Great Britain, France, Japan, Chang-tso-Lin, Romania and Chiang Kai-Shek were considerably strained. In the summer of 1927 the Soviet Union was perilously near war, dangerously near being attacked by Poland, Romania and the other lackeys of French and British imperialism. In these tense days the Soviet government resorted to foreign policy aiming to achieve peace for the proletarian state through negotiations with the powers leading to non-aggression, non-intervention and neutrality. The completion of certain defensive military preparations was the real force behind the arguments of the Soviet diplomats in these hours of strained relations.

4. Since then the USSR has entered upon a period of heightened prestige and prowess in its foreign relations, in its role in the international arena. The successful and rapid industrialization of the country, the great headway in collectivizing agriculture and the marked economic and cultural achievements through the Five-Year Plan laid the foundation for another change of attitude on the part of the big powers towards the Soviet Union. The intense economic crisis gripping the leading capitalist countries – specifically the US – drove some of them to less hostile relations with the USSR. The increased effectiveness of the Red Army cooled Japanese ardor for an attack on the Socialist Republic. The rising menace of German imperialism disturbed the French and British governments sufficiently to diminish momentarily their active hostility towards the Soviets.

The political and economic agreements between the USSR and other countries are agreements utilized by, constitute the strategy employed by the Soviet Union, as a government, for the Soviet Union, as a government, for the purpose of strengthening its international position against attack by a single capitalist country or bloc of imperialist powers.

2 Soviet Diplomacy at Work

Throughout the various stages of its foreign policy, the USSR has pursued a consistent course in which we find certain 'red threads', definite guiding lines. Briefly stated these are:

1. To maintain and consolidate the position and to extend the prestige and influence of the Soviet Union as the base of the international proletarian revolution. Given the beating back of the post-war wave of proletarian revolution in Western Europe, there was but the following course open to the victorious Russian working class: the enhancement of the prestige of the USSR in the eyes of the international working class and of the oppressed colonial masses. This could, of course, be best achieved through showing practical results, significant successes, socially and economically at home and through striking fear and respect into the hearts of the imperialist enemies abroad. In this sense the Soviet Union serves as an example, as an inspiration and as the citadel of proletarian power on a world scale.

2. The USSR, still being alone, must strive to secure the maximum 'breathing spell' needed for continuing and strengthening the economic and political position already won by the international proletariat in what was once the Tsarist empire. Of course, if Germany had gone Soviet, if Austria and the Balkans had gone Bolshevik, this question of a breathing spell would assume a different character.

3. Soviet foreign policy is at all times cognisant of the fact that the USSR is situated between two infernos – a Japanese imperialist inferno in the East and a monster German-Polish war machine in the West. Polish imperialism plays here a special role. It is a sworn enemy of the Soviet Union, whether it be in 'alliance' with the French bourgeoisie at one time or with the German capitalist at another.

4. Because of the sharp conflicts, because of the acute antagonisms among the imperialist powers, the Soviet Union may, should and must, at one time or another, come together with one or more of these countries to ward off attack by others. Thus the Soviet Union can have, together with the capitalist countries at one moment or another, common enemies but not common interests. For the Soviets, such alliances are strictly military and limited to defense. They are not *political* understandings, based on common interests.

The present relation of the Soviet Union to France, even in so far as military technique is concerned, is fundamentally identical with the relationship the Soviet Union once had, in the days of Lenin and Trotsky, with the Weimar Republic of Germany. At that time there took place an exchange of military

technicians, even a close working together of general staffs. No one then seriously questioned the great advantages reaped by the USSR in such collaboration with the German imperialist government. Today, the situation has changed only in form. The collaboration is now taking place between the USSR and the French Republic instead of the Weimar Republic. Today, as then, the Soviet Union does not have the same objectives as its collaborator. In the case of the military understanding with the Weimar Republic, the Soviet Union sought to make impossible an invasion of its territory by blocking the road through Germany; but in this case the German bourgeoisie had totally different aims. They sought, through this alliance with the USSR, to strengthen themselves so as to win a better position for the defeated German imperialism against the victorious imperialist powers. Today, through the alliance with France, the Soviets are seeking to paralyse German imperialist aggression against their territory; but the French bourgeoisie hopes, through the Franco-Soviet pact of mutual assistance, not only to be able to defend what they have won in the last war but also, if possible, to prevent the recurrence of the challenge from German imperialism.

5. Soviet foreign policy rests, in a measure, on a constantly changing balance of power and relations between various capitalist countries. The Soviet government is prepared to sign non-aggression pacts, or mutual assistance pacts, with any imperialist power, let us say for 10 years, although while signing it, the proletarian government knows very well that these pacts may last only 10 months or 10 weeks. Never do Soviet diplomats harbor any illusions as to the calendar life of such treaties or enter into an agreement in defense of one imperialist power against another. Always such non-aggression treaties are offered by the Soviets to all imperialist powers regardless of the conflicts among themselves. What the Soviet government is trying to get out of every imperialist power is the most effective pledge and guarantee against attack – no matter how little value such guarantees may have. Hence, the much-vaunted Eastern Pact of non-aggression was offered to France and Germany *simultaneously*. It is clear that the Eastern Pact is not an alliance with France against Germany but a move by the USSR to make more difficult or to prevent either or both of these imperialist powers from attacking the USSR.

6. The strategy of Soviet foreign policy, while utilizing these divisions amongst the imperialist powers, is not based on these divisions as definite or final. At any moment any imperialist power, regardless of whatever treaty it may happen to have with the USSR may turn against the USSR and join hands with its own enemies against the Soviet Union – the common enemy of all capitalist powers. Litvinov, in a recent address before the Central Executive

Committee of the Soviet government, very adequately explained the why and wherefore of such divisions amongst the imperialist countries. He said in part:

But not all capitalist countries, at any or every time or always, desire war to the same extent. Any, even the most imperialist state, at any given time, may become strongly pacifist. This happens when it has either suffered a defeat in a war, and therefore requires a certain interval before it can be ready for a new war, or when it has as antagonist a far more powerful state or group of states and the general political situation is unfavorable; or it may happen when a country has become over-satiated with victories and conquests and requires a certain period of time for the assimilation of these conquests.

Here we have the essence of the present international situation. No Communist maintains that any capitalist government will remain forever, or for any great length of time, for that matter, pacifist. Though France and England are today less bellicose than is Germany, it does not mean that they are less imperialist. It simply means that at the moment they (France and England) are not anxious for war because they have their bellies full – in more ways than one. Germany is, at the moment, more bellicose because she sees at hand an opportunity to get back some of the loot the other plunderers took from her in the last war.

7. The Soviet foreign diplomats are perfectly honest when they pledge non-interference in the internal affairs of foreign countries which have established relations with the USSR. In the present situation it is the Soviet Union, with a world of enemies against it, that has most to gain from such reciprocal pledges of non-interference in internal affairs. The Soviet Union has suffered for years through such interference by foreign powers in its internal affairs; for example, the years of foreign military intervention in Russia after the armistice was concluded. Obviously, in such agreements for mutual non-interference in the internal affairs it is the USSR which is the heavy gainer. Of course, the Soviet government has nothing to do with and does not assume any responsibility for Communist propaganda or activities conducted by the revolutionists of the various countries with which she, as a government, has diplomatic relations.

8. Soviet foreign policy further rests on a frank recognition of the fact that today the USSR is economically not yet self-sufficient, not yet self-sustaining. If any country is approaching self-sufficiency then the Soviet Union is, but this condition is still very far from realization. The Soviet Union still needs foreign machinery, foreign technical assistance, and certain foreign raw materials. Satisfactory economic relations that will enable the USSR to meet

these needs and to facilitate its progress in socialist construction are often impossible without normal diplomatic relations. Here were have the primary reason for the Soviet government seeking complete, normal diplomatic and economic relations with the other countries.

9. The strength of the Soviet Union in its international relations, the prestige of the USSR in its foreign policy, is due primarily and directly proportional to its own economic and political power. Only secondarily is the prestige of the USSR in international affairs due to the weaknesses or divisions among the imperialist countries.

It is in the consistent pursuit of the above lines of strategy that the Soviet government has, from the very first days of its existence, followed a vigorous peace policy. To achieve peace, the proletarian republic has, at times, had to make concessions and compromises. As the Soviet power became greater, the concessions and compromises became smaller. In this sense, Lenin was not a bad revolutionist because he signed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty when he did. This was the Soviets' moment of worst weakness and, therefore, the occasion for the signing of its most humiliating treaty. Trotsky was then not a better revolutionist because of his opposition to the signing of this infamous treaty. To have refused to make this terrific concession to German imperialism at the time would have spelled suicide for the Soviet government. As it is, Trotsky's haggling and bluffing at Brest-Litovsk contributed substantially towards the loss of Finland to the Whites.

Certainly Stalin is not a better revolutionist than was Lenin because he does not sign such degrading treaties today. He does not have to do so. Today the USSR is far more powerful. Lenin was compelled to sign treaties giving away, while Stalin is today in a position to sign treaties pledging capitalist powers not to take away.

The Soviet government earnestly desires to be at peace and to appear as the champion of peace in the eyes of the masses. This attitude is rooted in the anti-imperialist character of the proletarian dictatorship. The USSR does not merely talk peace in the abstract but dramatises its being different from other countries in practice. Hence the USSR has, in the interest of peace, often stood for lots of provocations and insults from far weaker countries. Animated by the same genuine desire for the continuation of peace, Soviet diplomats have come forward with the most practical and straight-forward proposals for prolonging peace, for paralysing the ventures of aggressors. Note the Soviet proposals for disarmament and its definition of an aggressor.

This realistic approach also characterises the attitude of the USSR towards the Versailles Treaty. The Soviet government will not join a war or enter any alliance with imperialist powers for its overthrow. Likewise, the Soviets will

not go to war or sign any pacts to preserve the Versailles system. As a working-class government, the USSR has its own very effective ways of getting rid of such monstrous treaties – via the revolutionary-proletarian methods which sent to the scrap heap the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. That is why the Soviet government can simultaneously make certain arrangements with powers adhering to and opposed to the Versailles pact. That is why in the very midst of the recent negotiations with the French government, the Soviet Union was able to arrive at an arrangement with Germany for securing eighty million dollars in credit from the latter for the purpose of improving the Russian railway system.

Today more than ever is the peace policy of the Soviet government conducive to the best interests of the entire international working class. Some might say: 'Why are the Russians so anxious for peace? Is it not true that if war comes, then revolution will follow?' Maybe. And maybe not. Perhaps the price – through actual devastation and destruction of human life and resources – will be so great that the proletariat will be bled white, too weak to make the revolution. Also, it would be suicidal folly to deny the possibility of the blackest reaction triumphing as a result of imperialist war.

However, there are today special reasons why the Russians and the rest of the international proletariat must strive to delay or prevent an outbreak of imperialist war. These are:

1. So acute have become the antagonisms among the capitalist countries that the danger of their maturing into an open explosion among the imperialist powers themselves can only be checked by unity against a common foe. Obviously, only the USSR could be such a common foe. Here we touch the cornerstone of Hitler's strategy. The Nazi chieftain is seeking world hegemony for German imperialism through placing Germany at the head of a world coalition of imperialist governments against the Soviet Union. Should Hitler succeed in his strategy, the life of the Soviet Union would be at stake, the contradictions among the imperialist powers themselves momentarily softened at the expense of the proletariat in Russia and at the expense of the labor movement in all countries. Fortunately, the USSR has so far been able, with the help of the pressure of the labor movements in the various capitalist lands, to outmaneuver Hitler.

2. Then, socialist construction in the Soviet Union has already reached that stage in which the difficulties are well on the way of being overcome – but not yet fully overcome. This is a very delicate moment in which the achievements of years could be destroyed in a war as if overnight. At this elbow of the road, at this decisive moment in the completion of the next stage of socialist construction in the USSR, peace is essential not only in the interest of the Soviet

proletariat but on behalf of the most fundamental interests of the international working class. A defeat for the Soviet Union would be a defeat for the workers of all other countries as well as the Russian workers. It would prove a signal for triumphant reaction in all capitalist countries.

3. Time is on our side. In so far as the Russian working class is concerned, it is getting stronger economically, in a military sense and politically with the passing of every day, while the antagonisms among the imperialists are getting sharper with the passing of every hour. Here we have increasing opportunities for the building of the revolutionary movement in every country. Again, time is on our side in so far as the working-class movements in the capitalist countries are concerned. What we must do is to win over the working class to the revolutionary principles of Communism, and to sound tactics. Simultaneously we must help the Russian workers and farmers, already victorious over their own capitalist forces, to become impregnable against attack from the outside as well. Only in this way can we hasten the moment when the consolidated power of the Soviet proletariat and the sufficiently strengthened forces of the revolution in other countries can jointly make a frontal attack on international capitalism.

3 Debunking Some Critics of the Soviets

So far we have examined the fundamental features characterizing the foreign policy of the USSR from the days when Lenin was its best head, and Trotsky its most articulate mouth, through to the present day when Stalin is its firmest hand. Now let us turn to an examination of the case made against Soviet foreign policy by its opponents. This indictment runs along the following lines:

1. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is engaged in an economic drive at home to build socialism in the USSR. This policy of building 'socialism in one country' is the cornerstone of Soviet foreign policy and spells disinterest-
edness in, and neglect of, the world revolution.

2. In its desperate efforts to achieve this goal, the USSR has been driven to resort to speed-up in production, the stimulation of competition among individuals and the fostering of inequalities in Soviet industry. Worse than that, cry these critics, the Soviets are therefore bent on developing and intensifying commercial relations with capitalist powers. In the same breath these calumniators of the motives of Soviet foreign policy find the Soviets guilty of what appears to them an abhorrent crime – the crime of seeking to become self-sufficient. On this basis, they argue, the USSR is bound to be suffering from a

weak-kneed policy in foreign affairs and from too great an anxiety for peace, even at the expense of the world revolution.

3. This foreign policy, 'forced on the Soviet Union by the present leadership of the CPSU, headed by Stalin', the self-confessed ultra-revolutionists maintain, means giving up the Comintern, presupposes adamant refusal to render armed aid to the proletariat and colonial masses inhabiting five-sixths of the earth. The interests of the Soviet Union are in conflict and incompatible with the interests of the international proletariat, according to these critics.

The perpetrators of such masterpieces of confusion and calumny must naturally come to but one conclusion: the USSR and its foreign policy are 'past hope, past care, past help'. Hence, Fenner Brockway, the leader of the Independent Labor Party of England, sizes up Soviet foreign policy in this fashion:

Russia does not want war. That, one understands. But international opposition to imperialism must not be sacrificed even to the interests of Russia.¹⁸

Brockway, to concretise his complaint, chides the Soviet government for 'acquiescence in Japanese imperialism in the East':

The danger is that in the immediate strengthening of the tie between the Soviet government and the capitalist governments the ties of international working class struggle and solidarity may be weakened.

Mr. Eden was welcomed as though he were in a capitalist country rather than in a workers' state. The workers' state which has overthrown Monarchy, Capitalism, and Imperialism flaunted the symbols of Monarchy, Capitalism, and Imperialism at every hand. Union Jacks were displayed at every turn; Mr. Eden heard the strains of the National Anthem wherever he went. If this violation of the whole spirit of Soviet Russia really impressed Mr. Eden, it can only have been because he felt that *it signified a modification of the Russian attitude*.¹⁹

To have completed his horrible picture of betrayal, Fenner Brockway should not have forgotten to mention that Mr. Eden was also compelled to listen to the strains of 'The Internationale' and other revolutionary songs of the Red Army and world proletariat. Incidentally, it might be further added that while

18 *New Leader*, London, 17 June 1934.

19 *New Leader*, London, 5 April 1935: our emphasis.

Litvinov, under instructions of the CPSU, was toasting King George V, Pollitt, under instructions of the CPGB, was roasting the same King George and organizing demonstrations against the silver jubilee of this over-aged monarch.

Trotsky, chief of these prosecutors of the 'guilty' leadership of the CPSU, has from his false premise logically concluded that: 'The more the USSR strengthens its international position, the deeper becomes the rift between the Soviet government and the international struggle'.²⁰ In other words, in line with Trotsky's reasoning, the weaker the international position of the USSR, the less of a rift there is between the Soviet government and the international revolutionary movement. What tasks such a policy would set for the international labor movement are obvious: outright anti-Soviet operations.

It is necessary to clear the ground and take the discussion out of the atmosphere of factional pique in which the Trotskyites have placed it. Let us face conditions as they are – in their historical light, as they developed over years for the Russian and the entire international proletariat.

The world revolution which the Soviet proletariat in 1917 expected to come has not come yet. The Russian proletarian revolution is the first chapter of the international revolution but only one chapter at that. The bourgeoisie succeeded in inflicting a number of serious defeats on the international revolution and in stabilizing its rule. Who of us has forgotten the defeat of the Red Army at the gates of Warsaw, the gates of Western Europe, when the Soviet proletariat made a heroic but unsuccessful attempt, through armed aid, to extend the world revolution beyond its own borders? And let no one forget our defeats in Bavaria, Hungary and Germany. Bolsheviks must never hesitate to admit defeats. Denying them does not overcome them.

By the way, Trotsky & co. should be the last ones to organize a slander chorus against the present CPSU leadership for not rushing armed aid to the world proletariat *at all times*. Such armed aid cannot be rendered indiscriminately, regardless of the conditions at hand, without regard to the class relations in the country to be assisted. Even in Lenin's days, in an international situation which was far more revolutionary than today, the Bolshevik Party limited its armed aid to the proletariat in revolt in the regions of the former Tsarist Empire. And not in every case was such aid appropriate, as could be seen from the reactions of Polish workers to the red drive in 1920.

When Trotsky was still at the zenith of his career in the Russian Revolution he consistently and vigorously maintained the position – even to the point of impermissibility – that it was wrong to carry revolution into a country from the outside. From this reason, he opposed the Warsaw offensive in 1920; very properly he eloquently implored the Moscow proletariat not to lose its

20 *New Republic*, 1 November 1933.

head clamouring to rush armed forces to aid the German workers in 1923. In February 1931 Trotsky went to unwarranted lengths and even opposed the Red Army helping the revolutionists in Georgia, now one of the Soviet Republics. This question of armed aid by the Russian proletariat to the workers of other countries should never be handled in a factional manner. Lenin focused the proper light on this all-important problem when he declared: 'But we have not pledged ourselves to start a revolutionary war without taking into account how far it is possible to wage such a war at any particular moment'.²¹

Evidently, Trotsky, embittered by the treatment he received at the hands of the Stalin leadership, is now seeking to perform an upside-down operation. Such operations in revolutionary politics are unprincipled and ruinous. They are dictated only by factional considerations and merit only unmerciful condemnation by every class-conscious worker.

The argument that the Soviet government is betraying the world proletariat because it has relations with capitalist countries is not new. It is as old as such foreign relations are. It saw the light of day long before Stalin was *primus* in the CPSU leadership. Let us turn to the deliberations of the Comintern Enlarged Executive Committee in February–March 1922. At this time the French, Italian, and Spanish Communist Parties' delegations denounced the adoption of united front tactics by the CI. These delegations charged that such tactics – united front actions by Communist parties with Social-Democratic parties and organizations – were dictated by needs of Soviet foreign policy. Speaking for the French delegation, Monmousseau said in part:

Why do we need a united front now? Because the revolution is surrounded by a world of enemies, is isolated and cannot continue to exist forever in such a hostile world without the help of the international proletariat... Since the Russian Revolution cannot rely upon the hypothesis of the world revolution nor on the effective forces of the Communist International, it is constantly seeking new alignments. It is no longer banking on the international revolution but is concerned only with the preservation of the fruits of the Russian Revolution. The Russians... are

21 The editors have been unable to locate this precise quotation, although it is consistent with numerous statements from Lenin's writings and speeches in February and March of 1918 – for example, in his polemic, 'The Revolutionary Phrase', in which he noted that 'our press has always spoken of the need to prepare for a revolutionary war in the event of the victory of socialism in one country with capitalism still in existence in the neighbouring countries', but went on to argue that 'we are accepting an unfavourable treaty and a separate peace knowing that today we are not yet ready for a revolutionary war, that we have to bide our time..., we must wait until we are stronger' (Lenin 1960–79b, pp. 19, 26).

now forming alliances with capitalist states . . . and are desirous of coming to an understanding with the reformists in order to save the Soviet Union.

Most effective in their replies to the above accusation were Zinoviev and Trotsky. Zinoviev, then the head of the CI, posed the problem in its true historical light. He said:

If, for example, the Red Army of Soviet Russia had taken over Warsaw in 1920, the tactics of the CI today would be quite different. This, however, did not happen. The Russian Party was forced to make greater economic concessions to the peasants and partly to the bourgeoisie. This decreased the tempo of the proletarian revolution, and vice versa; the defeats suffered by the proletariat of Western Europe during 1919 and 1921 influenced the policies of the first proletarian state and slowed down the tempo in Russia. It is a two-fold process. The difficulties of the Russian Soviet government had their effects on all other parties; the general fight for the emancipation of the working class likewise influences our policies.

This is the sense of the position taken by the Third Congress [22 June–12 July 1921] as well as in the theses on the united front in relation to Soviet Russia. This, however, by no means signifies that the Russian Party, which is the leading party in the Comintern, will utilise these for its own egoistic purposes. To maintain this is to slander the Comintern. It is impossible to conceive that the interests of a proletarian power are not identical with the interests of the entire proletariat. The Russian Revolution as well as the struggles of the German, English and French workers affect the new situation; the Russian Revolution more so because within the last few years the struggle of the Russian proletariat has been of greater significance than that of other countries. But one cannot maintain that the Comintern is misusing any policy in the interest of the workers' government. To maintain this means to argue from the point of view of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half International and is to fail to understand that the deeper historical interests of the first victorious proletarian state are identical with those of the entire working class.

And Trotsky followed in the same vein by saying:

Comrades, the interests of the Soviet Republic can be none other than the interests of the international revolutionary movement. And if you believe that we have become so absorbed and so hypnotised by our

tasks as statesmen that we are no longer capable of correctly estimating the interests of the labor movement, then it would be in place to add a paragraph in the statutes of our International according to which every party unfortunate enough to have seized state power is expelled from the International. (Laughter).

The Trotsky of 1922 talked quite a different language from the Trotsky of 1933! No one should be tempted to ask why the sharp swerve by this erstwhile member of the Political Bureau of the CPSU.

History does repeat itself. But how? When the French CP last year dropped its anti-united-front policy and made an almost one hundred and eighty degree turn in the opposite direction, many of the carping critics of the USSR shrieked that this turn was made because of the needs of Soviet foreign policy. They charged that the interests of the Soviet government inspired the CP of France to come out for the united front. Of course, these same people, only a few weeks before the turn by the French CP, howled that in the interest of Soviet foreign policy the French Communists were against the united front. At this point, it is not inappropriate to underline the fact that the Soviet foreign policy toward France remained unchanged while the French CP's policy changed completely. This shift by the French CP to united front tactics arose primarily because of mass pressure in its ranks for united action with the SP to stem the Fascist tide. Apparently when clique venom is substituted for a Marxian political approach, such 'little things' as mass pressure are easily overlooked.

It is indeed laughable that hardboiled centrists in the labor movement should be jumping on the Soviet government and condemning its foreign policy as responsible for recent changes for the better in Comintern policy. The depths of folly in this position are reached by Brockway. He says:

A further development arising from Soviet Russia's foreign policy must be recognised. There is not only the tendency of the Soviet government to modify its attitude towards the capitalist-imperialist governments. There is the tendency of the parties affiliated with the Communist International to modify their policies in a parallel way. In every country the Communist Party is clearly preparing the way for a changed attitude towards the Labor Party.²²

When the CPGB was steeped in ultra-leftism, Brockway said its sectarian policy was dictated by the interests of Soviet foreign policy. He did not like these

22 *New Leader*, 30 November 1934.

leftist tactics of the CPGB. Now, the CPGB is beginning to correct its tactics. Brockway boasts of being a dyed-in-the-wool revolutionary socialist. As such, he should surely welcome the turn for the better in CP tactics, its break with ultra-leftism. However, he chirps only one way:

The Soviets' foreign policies are wrong, are nationalist. These foreign policies are the mainspring of the various Communist parties. Hence, regardless of what the tactics of the Communist parties can be, they are wrong at their very source.

We might add that the refrain *à la* Brockway would be: Communist policies always have been wrong, are now wrong and always will be wrong.

Confusion worst confounded is a generous estimate of such 'deep reasoning'!...

7 Soviet Foreign Policy and the Comintern

To the splenetic and rash in the labor movement there appears to be the following arrangement between the USSR and the imperialist powers: in return for capitalist trade, concessions and recognition, the CPSU, leading the Soviet government, is to de-revolutionize and finally to give up the Comintern.

There is not the slightest foundation in fact for this conclusion. Until a few months ago, the entire line of the Comintern was atrociously ultra-leftist; there was pursued a strategic course based on a totally false estimate of conditions, based on an exaggeration of the degree of development of the class struggle and the objective possibilities for revolutionary conflicts in Western Europe and the United States. We were in the 'Third Period', in the period of revolutionary upsurge and wars and revolutions on all sides! The Comintern strategy was adjusted to this fantastic conception. Nor was this merely a paper evaluation. The various sections of the CI, vigorously pushed and aided by the ECCI, dominated by the CPSU, unfortunately had to work on this basis in their respective countries. Yet it was precisely in this period that the capitalist powers accorded more and more recognition to the USSR.

The foreign policies of the various bourgeois powers are in no way determined by the tactical course of the Communist International. It is not at all true that the less vigorous, the less revolutionary the CI, the more concessions and the better the terms the imperialist powers accord the USSR. In fact, the first capitalist recognition of the Soviet government came in the crimson days,

the first years, of the CI. Furthermore, it was precisely in these days that the Soviet government had to pay the highest price in its foreign relations.

Countries having far more fear of revolution than the US recognised the Soviet government long before Uncle Sam did. And the Soviet Republics made far greater concessions than today to the bourgeois countries when their regimes were far less stable, far more in danger of being overthrown by their proletariat than at present. Witness the treaties with Estonia (1920), Poland and Latvia (1921), and the Treaty of Rapallo with Germany in April 1922. These were the days of Lenin and Trotsky and not the days and nights of Stalin.

Of course, the factionally perverted might say that the CPSU, dominating the CI, deliberately forced an ultra-left, sectarian line on the Comintern in order to hide, with a revolutionary cover, as it were, the very aim of giving up the Communist International. The crass hypocrisy of these distorters is revealed by the fact that it was precisely they who conceived and initiated the ultra-left course. At the peak of this ultra-revolutionism in August 1929, Rakovsky and Trotsky emphasised to the CPSU that 'there had been a softening of opinion between us (Stalin and Trotsky) through circumstances'. A little later, in his letter to his so-called *Leninbund* of Germany, Trotsky boasted that 'to be a sectarian today is an honor for every real revolutionary'. And Trotsky's most persistent parrot in the US not so long ago uttered the following words of truth, though not of wisdom: 'Stalin had to borrow copiously from the ideological arsenal of the Left Opposition'.²³

More than that. If these critics honestly attribute to the Soviet government and its leadership such nefarious motives and dastardly plans of betrayal, then they should logically condemn the USSR as the most dangerous type of anti-proletarian state which is not only against its own working class at home but also camouflages itself in order to undermine and poison the working-class movements throughout the world. Trotskyist logic should then impel these latter-day saints of 'pure revolution' to call upon the entire international proletariat to wage a holy war against this ogre known as the CPSU, this unholy monster called the Soviet government. The Trotsky program for civil war in the USSR is in line with this logic. And a blood brother of the Trotsky family, like the United Workers Party, is consistent enough to declare: 'Russia will enter the next world war, as it now prepares for it, as an imperialistic force lined up with other imperialistic forces and it is not possible for the working class to have any other position towards Russia than towards any other country. The answer of

23 Shachtman 1933, p. 60.

the revolutionary movement to war is revolution; so, too, must be the answer of the Russian workers to a war in which Russia participates ...'²⁴

Too many speak too often of the world revolution as if it were some Messianic conception. The social revolution is not something that will happen all at once, that must come on a certain date, but is something that is happening, is developing. As Lenin saw it, 'the social revolution cannot ensure save in the form of an epoch ...' Historically speaking we are in that epoch now. That does not mean, however, that every moment of that epoch is equally appropriate for 'civil warfare on the part of the proletariat'. Altogether too often do many talk too loosely of the world revolution. They seem to think that all that is needed for the world revolution to happen (in one act, perhaps) is for the USSR 'not to hold back' the working classes of other countries. This is plain poppycock. The slowness of international revolutionary development is not due to the 'bad intentions' of the Soviet leaders as reflected in Soviet foreign policy. Rather, this slowed-down development is due to a whole series of factors; to wit, the treacherous role of Social Democracy, consequent immediate post-war defeats of the Bolsheviks, CI mistakes in tactics, economic possibilities for, and the political ability of the bourgeoisie to recover and hit back, etc.

The fundamental problem involved here is that of the relationship between the interests, aims, and tactics of a Communist Party already in power and those of the CPSs still struggling to win a majority of the workers for taking power. Both types of Communist parties have identical interests. Both types of Communist parties seek the destruction of all capitalist forces and the state powers which protect and seek to perpetuate the bourgeoisie as ruling classes. In this light, the revolutionary class struggle is thoroughly international. We must, however, distinguish between the various stages of the class struggle in the different countries. This means that we must differentiate between, and must allow for, differences in the tactics employed by the Communist Parties in the sundry countries for the achievement of the common identical objectives.

This process of differentiation is rooted not only in the uneven development of capitalism itself, not only in the distinct class relations prevailing in different countries, but also in the degree of strength developed by the various Communist parties. Thus the victorious CPSU faces today two problems – *viz*, the wiping out of the remaining capitalist elements within the Soviet borders and the aiding and abetting of the destruction of all capitalist forces outside Soviet territory. In the first case, it is the Soviet power against the remnants of one capitalist class; in the second instance, the CPSU tackles a job in which, controlling an armed Soviet power, it is facing many or all capitalist

24 International Council Correspondence, July 1935, p. 13.

classes and the countries which they dominate. As a section of the world Party of Communism, the CPSU thus faces the problems of red 'intervention'. Any other Communist party in power would face the same and other problems. For us Communists it is categorical that every CP in power, that every proletarian state not only has the right to such 'intervention', but is duty bound to exercise this right. In fact, the Red Army today in the USSR – tomorrow in another country – is so trained and organized as to be able to fulfil this duty at the proper moment. The only problem involved here is a political and technical one, the propriety of the moment, the ripeness of the occasion for such red 'intervention'.

Would any of the opponents of Soviet foreign policy really propose that the USSR and the CPSU, which leads it, should today exercise this right, should declare that now is the proper moment for fulfilling this duty, let us say, in Germany or England? Obviously this would mean pitting the USSR not against one capitalist power but against the whole capitalist world today – when the proletariat of the different bourgeois countries is still not only far from being able to do its share in the way of rendering armed aid to the Soviet government, but is even still largely nationalistic in a bourgeois sense. Clearly, this would be suicidal and impractical. It would mean certain disaster for the USSR and its victorious working class. Just now, Hitler would welcome such an attempt by the Soviet government. That's precisely what Nazi Germany is seeking. Indeed, Hitler's powerful propaganda machine is trying desperately to sell the capitalist world the idea that the USSR is about to launch such a war against all capitalist countries. Fortunately, Soviet foreign policy has been able, so far, to thwart the Nazi bandits in their maneuvers against the USSR, in the moves to put Germany at the head of the armies of the big powers on the march against the USSR.

We must, therefore, recognise that the USSR is compelled to find some *modus vivendi* with the imperialist and capitalist powers. This *modus vivendi* is expressed in certain compromises by the Soviet government, by the Russian proletariat already in power, in certain economic relations, pacts, treaties and diplomacy resorted to by the USSR. The same would hold for the CP in the US if it were today a party in power and in the international position in which the USSR now finds itself.

But because the state politics of the USSR (laid down by the CPSU) *necessarily must be different and cannot be identical* with the politics of the various other sections of the CI, one should not conclude that there is a fundamental, necessary or unavoidable conflict between the interests of the CPSU as the leading party of the CI, as the sole victorious party, and the other sections of the CI. We cannot stress too strongly that *the methods and tactics of the various*

individual sections of the CI and of the Comintern as a whole towards bourgeois governments must today be totally different from the methods and tactics laid down for the Soviet government by the CPSU.

When we grant this necessary difference of tactics in the pursuit of common aims, in defense of common interests, it does not, for even a fraction of a second, mean that the CPSU cannot make mistakes in the tactics it works out for the Soviet government, that the Soviet state cannot make mistakes in its diplomatic relations, in its foreign policy. Nor does it mean that when such mistakes are made by the CPSU and the Soviet government which it controls, we should close our eyes to them and not criticize them. The very opposite is the case. Only the most unequivocal but constructive criticism can hasten the overcoming and prevent the recurrence of such mistakes.

For instance, Stalin's joining Laval in the *communiqué* accompanying the necessary and correct signing of the Franco-Soviet pact was the gravest of errors. Being the symbol and the decisive and almost sole leader of the CI today, Stalin made a fatal mistake in joining Laval in a declaration that he 'understands and approves fully the national defense of France in keeping her armed forces at a level required for security'. The French CP immediately took this not merely as a diplomatic declaration but as a line of policy for the CI.

Likewise, we must condemn Radek's recent declaration in the Japanese press, assuring the world that the Soviet Union will not resort to armed force in the inner-Chinese complications and that the freedom of the Chinese people is the concern of the Chinese nation itself. In the face of reality and for strategic reasons, it is not wrong in principle to say that the USSR is not contemplating armed intervention in China, but the form of Radek's declaration was impermissible.

Besides this, it is also possible for individuals who symbolise and speak solely in the capacity of Soviet diplomats to make mistakes. In this light, Litvinov's declaration in the League of Nations, hailing Germany's victory in the Saar plebiscite, was not sound from the point of view of the best interests of Soviet foreign policy. To say the least, it was uncalled for and clumsy.

8 Soviet Foreign Policy and World Revolution

The Trotskyite theory that there is a fundamental cleavage between the interests of 'Russian state policy' and the interests of the international proletariat is false from top to bottom. Ludwig Lore, in the *New York Evening Post*, lodges this accusation rather crudely as follows: 'Protection and safety for the Soviet is everything; the movement is nothing...'

Let us see how much water and what sort of water this theory holds. In a long-range sense, the foreign policy of the USSR is an essential and effective weapon not merely of the Russian workers but of all workers against world imperialism. When the Soviet Union is strengthened then the efforts of the workers in other countries to establish proletarian dictatorships are strengthened. When the Soviet government throws its weight in the international arena for peace – even for the shortest time – it helps the proletariat in the other countries to delay, check, or paralyse the war moves by their own bourgeoisie.

Experience itself is the decisive test here. The mounting prestige and rising influence of the USSR inspires the workers of other countries in their daily struggles. For instance, the strength of the USSR enabled it to form military alliances with the French and Czecho-Slovakian governments. The effect of this Soviet alliance upon the proletarian masses of these countries was evidenced in the last elections held there. The primary reason for the gain in Communist votes in these elections was the increased sympathy for, and enhanced prestige of, the USSR as a force for world peace, as the force for preventing war. Were it not for this stimulus given to the workers in France and Czecho-Slovakia by Soviet foreign policy, there is every reason to believe that the Communist strength in these elections would have been either stagnant or receding.

Besides this, many sections of the bourgeoisie, even in countries compelled to form temporary military alliances with the USSR, dread the Red Army. They realize that the Red Army is not an instrument of imperialism and would engage only in a war whose interests are totally different from those animating the capitalist ruling classes. Furthermore, many capitalists are scared because they fear that such alliances might have a revolutionary effect on their own armies. [...]

In this light only must we face the problem of the defense of the Soviet Union. Obviously, the CPSU defends the Soviet Union with different tactics than those employed by the Communist parties which have not yet won power. There is no such question as to ‘what comes first’, the defense of the Soviet Union or the revolutionary struggles inside any particular country. The two are distinct but inseparable phases of one organic task: *the defeat of the international bourgeoisie*. A successful defense of the Soviet Union by the CPSU helps the revolutionary labor movement in the capitalist countries, that is, a rising revolutionary proletarian movement is the best defense of the USSR by the non-Russian workers.

When we make this point we do not in the faintest way desire to minimize the counter-effect, the negating influence, the weakening of the international labor movement through the false tactics pursued by the Communist International in the various countries. Incidentally, in speaking of factors

responsible for the present plight of the international labor movement outside of the USSR, one must not forget the disastrous consequences flowing from the principles as well as tactics of Social Democracy the world over. In the capitalist world, Social Democracy is far more influential and generally far stronger numerically than the Communist movement. The Labor and Socialist International has contributed more than its share to the weakening of the world working-class movement, to the defeat of the proletariat in Germany, Austria, Spain and elsewhere.

Again, we cannot stress too much one very serious mistake that all Communist parties must avoid in the present situation. This is the following: the successes and achievements of the USSR, whether on the economic field or in international politics, can under no circumstances replace the revolutionary struggle in the other countries. A correct foreign policy pursued by the Soviet government, led by the CPSU, can never be a substitute for correct tactics by the Comintern or any of its sections in capitalist countries. It is entirely possible that, at a particular moment, the Comintern as a whole may have false tactics, while the tactics laid down by the CPSU for the Soviet government in its relations with capitalist powers may be sound.

It can also happen that the mechanical, artificial transference of these sound tactics from the USSR would in itself doom them when applied in other countries – would in itself be the source of fatal harm to the CP's resorting to such a strategic course. In fact, the recent history of the Comintern abounds with costly errors emanating from this source. Right in the Soviet Union does not necessarily mean correct in the other sections of the Comintern; vice versa, wrong tactics in other sections of the Comintern, do not necessarily mean wrong policies by the CPSU. Nor must anyone attempt to *hide* or minimize the falsity of the line of the Communist International at a particular moment behind the soundness and achievements of Soviet foreign policy.

The question of constructing socialism in the Soviet Union is much more than an ordinary tactical problem confronting the proletarian republic. In its many ramifications it is a vital problem faced by the entire international working class and the many millions of oppressed colonial peoples. The Russian workers have seized political power. They now rule one-sixth of the earth. What should they do with their power *within the Soviet Union*? This is no abstract question flourishing in a vacuum. To play with state power is to play with fire. Clearly, the question cannot be treated abstractly. What should the Russian workers do in the Soviet Union but build socialism? For what other purpose shall the Russian proletariat use – inside the USSR – the state power they now wield except for constructing socialism? None of the critics of the CPSU has to date offered an alternative to the Russian proletariat.

What do we mean by the question: can the proletariat build socialism in the Soviet Union? The construction of socialism in the Soviet Union means the overcoming of all capitalist elements in the USSR, by the Soviet workers themselves, with their own forces, without armed proletarian aid from the outside. Hence, we pose the question: is the proletariat of the USSR capable of uprooting completely its own bourgeoisie? For years, the CPSU has answered this question with an emphatic yes. If the CPSU were not correct in concluding that the Soviet proletariat was capable of overcoming fully all capitalist elements within its country, that is of building a socialist society, then it would really have no reason for maintaining power. We should then stop fooling the workers in the USSR and everywhere else and give up power to another class.

But living facts speak much louder than sterile, false theories. Despite the tremendous difficulties, technical backwardness, the slowing down of the proletarian revolution in Western Europe and America, bitter imperialist opposition, the Soviet proletariat has remained in power, has consolidated its position and has splendidly utilised its power for achieving remarkable progress in socialist construction. Witness the world astounding achievements of the first and second Five-Year Plans in all walks of life.

This policy has been persistently pursued by the Bolsheviks from the very moment of their assumption of power; it was a policy which Lenin defended vigorously against Trotsky years before the October Revolution. In 1915, in an article in the *Social Democrat*, then the central organ of the Bolsheviks, Lenin stated:

Uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. From this it follows *that the victory of Socialism at first in a few, or even in a single country taken separately, is possible*. The victorious proletariat of this country, (where the proletarian dictatorship is in force, – J.L.), having expropriated the capitalists and organized Socialist production in its own country would rise against the rest of the capitalist world, attract to its side the oppressed classes of other countries, raise revolt against the capitalists of these countries and, if necessary, take up arms against the exploiting classes in those states.²⁵

And in 1919, in his article 'Economics and Politics in the Epoch of the Proletarian Dictatorship', Lenin further emphasised: 'From the point of view of fundamental economic problems, the victory of the dictatorship of the proletariat in our

25 Our emphasis. *Editors' note*: this appears in slightly different translation in Lenin 1960–79c, p. 342.

country, the victory of Communism over capitalism is assured. It is precisely for this reason that the bourgeoisie of the whole world is furious and raves against Bolshevism and is organizing military crusades, conspiracies, etc., against the Bolsheviks; it is because they perfectly well understand that our success in the work of reconstructing social economy is assured, unless they crush us by military force and to crush us in this manner they will fail to do'.²⁶

No one should speak of the revolutionary class struggle, its problems, difficulties, and perspectives in the abstract – divorced from reality. When we now speak of constructing socialism we have in mind not any one country in the abstract, let us say Monaco or Luxembourg, but concretely the USSR, abounding in natural resources, covering one-sixth of the earth, rich in certain revolutionary traditions, having certain historical figures, having a proletariat playing a certain dynamic and decisive role in relation to other classes, etc. In this sense, we can only repeat that constructing socialism in the Soviet Union involves the ability of the Soviet proletariat to defeat decisively its own (national) bourgeoisie. This job the Russian proletariat can do with difficulties, with mistakes, but even without armed help of the Western European and American proletariat.

Naturally no one claims that the Soviet proletariat alone, regardless of the strength it has attained to date, can now destroy the entire international bourgeoisie without the armed assistance of the international working class. Therefore, the final, complete and unbreakable victory of socialism *on a world scale* involves the victory of the Soviet proletariat *and* the rest of the international working class in a combat with world imperialism. Surely many of the critics of Soviet foreign policy would hesitate advocating that the USSR should today, without the armed aid of the Western European and American working class, launch a frontal attack on the entire world bourgeoisie.

When the Russian proletariat snapped the chains of Tsarism and broke the chains of capitalism, it was not a victory only for the Russian workers. The Russian October is, so far, the mightiest, world shaking victory won by the entire international working class and all the world's colonial masses. The USSR as the land of the proletarian dictatorship, is, therefore, the base, the center, the inspiration of the international revolutionary movement. Its gigantic successes not only do not come at the expense of the world proletarian revolution but are milestones on the path of and powerful stimuli to this revolution.

The situation in which the Comintern finds itself today illustrates this very clearly. Were it not for the great victories scored by the Soviet proletariat in socialist construction, surely the false, sectarian, adventurist – and now the

26 *Editors' note:* a somewhat different translation can be found in Lenin 1960–79d, p. 110.

confused and opportunist – policies of the Comintern in the capitalist and colonial countries would by this time have reduced the CI to a mere memory. Here again the Soviet Union has been a lifesaver for the revolutionary international proletariat.

It is unchallengeable that the interests of the Russian and the rest of the international proletariat are inseparable and harmonious. They supplement and complete each other. There is no such thing as Soviet nationalism. This is a pure fabrication of the enemies of the international Communist movement, of the Soviet Union, of the entire world labor movement. The world proletariat has, so far, not had as powerful a stimulus, as powerful an impetus to its victory, as its successes and achievements in Russia. On the other hand, if the proletariat in the capitalist countries had not supported the Soviet Union, intervention would have come extensively and rapidly enough and the Soviet Republic, under attack by the imperialist powers, would have been overthrown.

If failure or disaster were ever to befall the Soviet Union, it would spell the darkest defeat for the workers and oppressed colonial peoples for many years. Again, should the international sympathy and support for the USSR grow, then the growth of socialist construction in the Soviet Union, the socialist victory, would be speeded up tremendously. If the Soviet Union moves forward swiftly in its drive for socialist construction, these socialist victories go a long way toward strengthening the proletarian positions of battle against international capitalism as such.

It is amusing to find that most of the critics of the USSR base themselves on the assumption that the Soviet government is not revolutionary enough towards capitalist governments. It is precisely these people who have, for years prior to the present juncture of international relations, condemned the Bolsheviks as too revolutionary. It is the same people who now demand that the CPSU should have the Red Army march through Germany to avenge the wrongs and injuries inflicted on the German proletariat by Hitler. There is little room for doubt that if the Red Army had marched, as some of these people now say they wanted it to march, most of these critics would today be helping their bourgeois governments against so-called red imperialism, against the attempts of the Russians to force a 'dictatorship' on the rest of the world. Surely, these critics will grant us that sending the Red Army into Germany would immediately mean a closed front of German, British, Italian, Japanese and American imperialism and all their lackeys against the USSR.

By the way, we wonder how some of these Social-Democratic opponents of Soviet foreign policy would have liked it if the Red Army were to have marched on Berlin in 1929 when Zoergiebel shot down thirty workers participating in a May Day demonstration prohibited by the Prussian 'Socialist' government.

No one need have even the slightest doubt that if this had occurred the Social Democrats the world over would have risen to the defense of German Social Democracy against Bolshevik 'dictatorship'!

It is just these people, who have yelled for years that the Soviet Union should not interfere in the affairs of other countries, that are now criticizing Soviet foreign policy and accusing the USSR of betraying the interests of the international working class because the Soviet government does not break diplomatic relations with Germany and does go out of its way to prevent an imperialist war which would, in every likelihood, bring about a concerted drive of the big capitalist powers against the Soviet Republic.

To conclude, the foreign policy of the Soviet Union is primarily a weapon of the Russian section of the international proletariat in the world struggle against imperialism. It is a weapon different from the weapons used by the workers of other countries because the Russian proletariat has already attained a higher degree of class consciousness, has already won power. In the use of the weapon, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union must take into consideration the actual class relationships prevailing inside the leading imperialist countries, the differences amongst the imperialist powers, the strength of the international labor movement and the economic and military forces at its own command. This is the only sound, practical revolutionary approach. Abstractions without foundation in fact, shibboleths as a substitute for reality, must be discarded.

Trotsky once struck the proper keynote in this field when he said:

It would be childish to argue from the standpoint of abstract revolutionary ethics. The point is not to die with honor but to achieve ultimate victory. The Russian Revolution wants to survive, must survive and must by every means at its disposal avoid fighting an uneven battle and gain time, in the hope that the Western revolutionary movement will come to its aid.

This has been and should remain the foundation of Soviet foreign policy.

August 1935

12. The Russian Events²⁷

The trial and execution of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov and thirteen others guilty of active conspiracy to murder the leaders of the CPSU and the Soviet Government has caused a profound stir, especially in the ranks of the class-conscious labor movement. We are convinced that there is no adequate reason at hand to doubt the confessions made by the accused. We can see how there can be discussion as to the manner of the confessions, their grovelling character, but we do not see any reason to doubt the genuineness of the confessions.

Politically, the degeneration of Trotsky and his fading followers into an outfit dedicated to terrorism in the Soviet Union is no surprise and is entirely understandable. At the time of the assassination of Kirov, when Trotsky's forces were then only implicated and not yet fully involved, we declared:

Under the conditions that have accompanied factional struggle in the CPSU in the last decade, every Party opposition, whatever its program may have been, attracted a fringe of disguised anti-Party and anti-Soviet elements. In addition, it must be remembered that for two years now the Trotskyites and other elements have been openly advocating the perspective of the violent overthrow of the Stalin regime in Russia – that is, of civil war. Between advocating an armed overturn and carrying out terroristic acts there is no difference in principle, the difference is only a tactical one. The former is frequently transformed into the latter once all hope of an effective mass movement is gone. Organized terror then seems to be the only way out.

The investigation made by the Soviet Government immediately after the Kirov assassination revealed the hand of a foreign, a bourgeois government in all the plotting against the USSR. The further revelations made on the occasion of the last trial, which was an open public trial at which the defendants had every opportunity to express themselves as fully and as freely as they wanted, showed still more clearly and established beyond a shadow of a doubt that

27 *Workers Age*, 5 September 1936, p. 2.

the Nazi government had aided and abetted some of the Trotskyist terrorist-conspirators. To some people this sounds fantastic, but if one considers the present character of the Trotsky program in regard to the Soviet Union, there is nothing fantastic about it but only quite a natural and logical outcome of the entire evolution of Trotskyism. For instance, but recently Trotsky declared:

What perspective offers itself to us? Very probably a new revolution. It will not be a social revolution, but a *political* one. The bourgeoisie also had 'great' revolutions that were exclusively politically developed on a secure property basis... The theoretical prognostications of Marx and Lenin did not foresee the possibility of a political revolution on the basis of property nationalized by the proletariat. But that was because they did not foresee the Bonapartist degeneration of the proletarian dictatorship.

On the basis of the above, which is a self-confessed break with Marxism-Leninism, it is quite obvious that the Trotsky terrorist-center would have little qualms of conscience about cooperating with the Gestapo to dispose of Stalin and other leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Government. It is this fundamental political position, undoubtedly counterrevolutionary in nature, which affords the primary basis and paramount motivation of the conduct of Trotsky and his followers and collaborators in organizing terroristic activities inside the Soviet Union. That is why Trotsky had great difficulties in explaining his position in the whole matter during the trial. That is why he issued several contradictory statements. The Trotsky remnants were in a desperate position and were unable to offer even a lame explanation.

Even at the time of the assassination of Kirov, Trotsky did not find it necessary to speak out clearly against individual terrorism as a method of struggle against the Party leadership in the Soviet Union. He then declared: 'The subjective motives of Nikolaev and his colleagues are immaterial to us. The road to hell is paved with the best intentions'.

What is this but in fact a justification of the assassination of Kirov? Nor does Trotsky help his case any when he declares, as he did at the time of the murder of Kirov, that 'individual terrorism is in substance merely a reflex of party bureaucracy' and that 'the party leadership bears the responsibility for the murder. In this sense one can say with full correctness: Stalin and his regime are responsible for the murder of Kirov'.

This reasoning is in line with the game played by the Nazis in which they always blame the murdered and never the assassins.

While condemning sharply the terroristic activities and complete degeneration of the Trotskyites, we must state that we very seriously doubt the wisdom and tact of the Soviet authorities in inflicting the merited punishment of death on such personages as Zinoviev, Kamenev, Smirnov, etc. Other and sufficiently adequate punishment could have been meted out without resorting to executions, and thus granting some recognition to the inestimable services once rendered by these erstwhile powerful figures in the ranks of the Bolsheviks. Furthermore, we do not hesitate to say that the bureaucratic regime of Stalin in the CPSU makes it extremely difficult for healthy, constructively critical opposition forces developing in the Party ranks. In fighting for a democratization of the system of Party leadership in the CPSU and in the Comintern as a whole we do so in the very highest interest of the proletarian victory already achieved in the USSR and yet to be achieved in other countries. We champion the extension of Party democracy in the CPSU as well as in other sections of the Communist International precisely because we reject categorically Trotsky's theory of Thermidorean degeneration of the Russian Revolution, precisely because we reject entirely Trotsky's evaluation of Soviet economic policy. Our sharp criticism of the Stalin leadership and lack of inner-Party democracy and of collective leadership is the best guarantee for preventing the development of even the slightest possibilities for such counterrevolutionary terrorist-activities as those resorted to by Trotsky. This demand of ours is in no wise a justification of the anti-working class position and actions of those who degenerate to them, but is on the contrary the best guarantee against them.

Finally, we would consider it extremely tragic and not at all in the interest of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Comintern if the Stalin leadership should, on the basis of its justifiable indictment and punishment of the Trotsky terrorists, seek to make still more impossible the development of healthy critical opposition inside the CPSU and the Comintern within the framework of Communist principles and democratic centralism.

International Affairs: 1937–40

Editors' note: In the trajectory of the Lovestone group over the four years stretching from the beginning of 1937 to the end of 1940 – as its very axis slips away – we can see a significant leftward shift followed by an even more dramatic veering to the right, and eventual collapse.

'One Soviet tractor is worth more than 10 good foreign Communists', was a comment circulating among highly placed Communists in the USSR during the first Five-Year Plan (1928–32), a comment which Isaac Deutscher suggests 'reflected the tenor of the intimate talk about the Comintern in Stalin's entourage'. Of course, the first Five-Year plan involved the implementation of Stalin's 'revolution from above' that pushed through the forced collectivisation of land (generating famine and millions of peasant deaths) and the rapid industrialisation policies, all of which was projected as Stalin's orientation of 'building socialism in one country'. This had been a major dividing line between Stalin and Trotsky, around which the Lovestoneites had taken Stalin's side, just as they had supported 'the general line' of the first Five-Year Plan, designed to create 'socialism', which for Stalin meant a modernising transformation of Russia from an agricultural backwater into an industrial power. Yet it was Stalin's orientation, backed by the Lovestone group, that ended up cutting the ground out from under them. The contempt for the Comintern, reflected in the remark about tractors, was in turn reflected in the Soviet leaders' tightening of their domination over its member parties, the better to manipulate them in the interests of the USSR's foreign policy; that foreign policy – after the disastrous consequences of 'Third Period' policies – would by 1935–6 swing into the direction of shrugging off class struggles and revolutionary possibilities in order to secure anti-Hitler alliances with 'democratic' capitalist governments. In the title of one of his last studies, historian E.H. Carr aptly labelled this period as 'the twilight of the Comintern'. At the same time, back in the USSR, authoritarianism and brutality, necessary features of the ruthless modernisation policies of Stalin's 'revolution from above', had closed off any pluralistic tendencies within the Soviet leadership and directly contributed to the initiation of the bloody repressions and purge trials that began with erstwhile allies of Trotsky (Zinoviev and Kamenev), to which the Lovestoneites could give at least uneasy support, but ultimately extended to their own ally Nikolai Bukharin.¹

1 Deutscher 1967, p. 405. See also Tucker 1992, Cohen 1975 and two key works by E.H. Carr: Carr 1982 and Carr 1984.

The general denigration and devaluation of the Communist International, and of its member parties, as an actual or potential revolutionary force would naturally pose a serious threat to Lovestone and his co-thinkers. These would-be revolutionaries had – along with Lenin and other leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution – devoted ‘the whole of their lives’ to this global entity to which, since 1929, they had been seeking readmission. In the excerpts offered here from Lovestone’s scathing critique, ‘The People’s Front Illusion’, we can see a group fighting for its very *raison d’être*. The critique is extended in the Lovestoneite defence, in the Spanish Civil War (1936–9), of the revolutionary-socialist orientation of their co-thinkers and comrades in the United Marxist Workers Party (POUM), led by International Communist Opposition militant Juan Marín and former Trotskyist Andrés Nin. Examples provided here are a classic report by the anonymous eyewitness, ‘Lambda’, on ‘The Truth of the Barcelona Events’ (introduced by Bertram D. Wolfe), and Will Herberg’s ‘Jacobin Defence in the Spanish Civil War’ – but Wolfe himself went to Spain, producing the short book *Civil War in Spain*,² serialised in *Workers’ Age*, which also reprinted excerpts from George Orwell’s just-published book *Homage to Catalonia*. Their reports of the Soviet-Stalinist repression of revolutionaries in Spain overlapped with a dramatic shift in the Lovestoneite discussion of Stalin’s purge trials. Lovestone’s ‘The Meaning of the Soviet “Purge” Trials’ (July 1937) continued to give credence to charges against Zinoviev, Kamenev and others in the first purge trials of 1936 (and commended Stalin’s ‘great contributions to the growth and progress of the USSR and to the cause of the international labour movement’), but sharply challenged the second round of trials in 1937 as reflecting authoritarian weaknesses of the Stalin regime. In the following year, however, there was a third round of trials which targeted their old friend, Nikolai Bukharin. ‘Workers Age’ now ran an editorial – ‘Another Moscow Trial! A Statement’ – which denounced all of the trials and announced that ‘Stalin’s reactionary crusade of bureaucratic self-preservation is bringing havoc and devastation to the Soviet Union’, while Bertram D. Wolfe headlined his comments (made at a public meeting organised by the heretofore shunned Trotskyists) with the generalisation: ‘Stalinism Menaces World Labor Movement’.³

2 Wolfe 1937.

3 Serious studies which provide corroboration of their account, in addition to the work of E.H. Carr previously cited, include Broué and Termine 2008, Bolloten 1991 and Durgan 2007. The purge-trials in the USSR are dealt with in works by Deutscher, Tucker and Cohen previously cited, as well as in: Medvedev 1989, pp. 327–519; Getty and Naumov 1999; Rogovin 1998 and Rogovin 2009.

The inexorable approach of the Second World War – analysed in some detail in Lovestone's 'Tomorrow's War' (which he perceived as involving 'Sinister Interests and a Sordid Mess') – was initially perceived by the Lovestone group in terms outlined in Lewis Corey's 'War and Armament Economics', as reflecting an upwelling reactionary militarism and imperialism, also reflected in the Independent Labor League's official statement 'Keep America Out of War!' What for many on the left would be one of the most shocking developments – the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 – had been predicted in the *Workers' Age* editorial, 'Stalin Indicates Reich Alliance', five months before it happened. It was coolly analysed when it became a fact in an official ILLA statement, 'Hitler-Stalin Pact – What Does It Mean?' – presented as a vindication of the Lovestone position over the previous decade.

By 1940, however, a fundamental change had crystallised. A note of grim neutrality evident in the 1939 *Workers' Age* piece, 'Russia Invades Poland' shifted to hostility by the year's end – with a *Workers' Age* bitterly denouncing 'Soviet imperialism' in the editorial entitled 'And Now Finland'. This was expanded and deepened in Will Herberg's polemic, 'The New Imperialism of Stalinist Russia', ostensibly an attack on the mainstream-Trotskyist position of giving critical support to the USSR, while opposing the Stalin regime, in conflicts with capitalist states (the sort of thing the Lovestoneites would once have denounced as being unfair to Stalin). In fact, Herberg's article represented a basic shift in the Lovestone group's understanding of what Stalin's USSR did and did not represent: It did *not* represent any sort of socialism, and it did represent a totalitarian order with 'predatory appetites', which would be strengthened by any successes the Stalin regime enjoyed in foreign conflicts. Hence, 'the inescapable conclusion . . . that the "defence of the Soviet Union" has no meaning whatever for international socialism at the present moment'.

This falling away of the keystone of the Lovestone group's worldview resulted in its rapid disintegration, which was also facilitated by a profound debate on basic principles related to the Second World War. By the time the debate was concluded, a majority of the group had decided to go out of existence. At its 28–9 December 1940 National Convention, before passing the resolution to dissolve, it adopted the 'Resolution on War Policy', which concludes this section. While repeating much of its past analysis, there were important new points in the resolution:

1. Although all major sides in the coming war were imperialist powers, it definitely mattered which side won, and full support (including US military aid to Britain) should be given to defeat Hitler, who represented a 'totalitarianism', whose triumph would be disastrous to democratic, socialist and working-class forces throughout the world;

2. Although no support should be given to defend US-imperialist interests in the global economy, full support should be given to the US war effort if the United States was attacked by Hitler and his allies;
3. No support of any kind should be given to ‘totalitarian’ powers – which included Hitler’s regime but also Stalin’s as well.

This would provide a framework, as it turned out, not only for supporting the US government (imperialism and all – despite mild, moralistic dissent) during World War II, but also during the Cold War that would come into being immediately after.



1. People's Front Illusion⁴

Jay Lovestone

1 Essence and Background

It has been a long time since so many members of the Communist Party have been in as questioning a mood as they are at present. Not since the big split in the American and other sections of the Communist International in 1929 have so many communist sympathisers indicated such grave doubts about the general line of the Comintern.

Why this new phenomenon? How is it that such manifestations are possible after years of untiring effort of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) to extirpate root and branch all critics and critical ideas?

One need but look at the present program and practice of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), whose leadership is carrying out the newest Comintern line faithfully and blindly, to find the answer to these questions. One need but examine the farcical turn this line has taken in the Communist Party of Canada – and the tragic turn this line is taking in the banner party of the Comintern (CI), the French Communist Party – to understand why increasing numbers of proletarians, in the Communist parties or sympathetic to them, are either forced into open revolt or into a state of complete disaffection.

What is this new policy of the Comintern? How is it translated into life? What should members of the Communist Party do about it? What should workers who are communists but who find themselves unable to join the official Communist Party do about it? Is there a way out of the very serious condition into which the Communist parties outside the Soviet Union have been driven?

The Newest Line

The sum and substance of the newest line of the Comintern is the following: the present world situation, it holds, is everywhere characterised by a struggle

4 Lovestone 1937, pp. 3–20, 79–86.

between democracy (i.e. bourgeois or capitalist democracy) and Fascism. In some countries, Fascism has already won. There, the job of the Communist parties is to do everything possible to restore this democracy (Germany). In other countries, the menace of Fascism is growing in varying degrees (France, England, the USA). Here, the main task of the Communists is to save capitalist democracy from the onrushing hordes of Fascism. In both cases, it is necessary for the Communist parties to collaborate not only with organizations and political parties of the lower middle class but even with those of other sections of the capitalist class if the latter are prepared to defend the democratic state (the form of government now prevailing in the USA, Great Britain and France). This collaboration of 'all anti-fascist forces' is to be secured by the Communists even at the cost of giving up both the right to propagate the principles of Communism and the right of independent working-class action in defense of the most elementary immediate interests of the proletariat.

More than that. This line is carried over into the realm of international policy. The programmatic declaration on the war question made by George Dimitrov, General Secretary of the Communist International, provides for the various Comintern sections rallying to the defense of the democratic (capitalist) countries against the aggression of the Fascist (capitalist) powers. This means that the Communist parties are no longer to try to win over the working class to a program of militant class struggle against the imperialist ruling classes in those cases in which the capitalist classes insure their domination through the so-called democratic form of state – especially in case of a war with a Fascist state.

These tactics of class collaboration at home – in the so-called democratic countries – have been baptised with the name of the People's Front. These tactics of defense of the 'democratic fatherland' against Fascist assaults are paraded as efforts on behalf of universal peace and progress. The latter is really an extension of the former. The two are organically tied together. Both sets of tactics are a monstrous violation of Marxist and Leninist teachings on the state and the revolutionary struggle against capitalism and imperialist war. As 'brilliant tactical maneuvers', as strategy modelled on the theory of the 'Trojan horse' (Dimitrov), they are suicidal. As an even momentary break with Communist principles, such moves are costly beyond calculation or repair – regardless of the nobility of the motives animating the tacticians. This criticism is not based on dogma or the mechanical parroting of a phrase or finding of Marx, Engels, Lenin – or even Stalin. It is the criticism of a policy which turns its back on some of the most fundamental experiences and lessons of history. We must continue to test theories and policies in the light of their real effects on life.

Back to First Principles

On this basis only will we examine some of the concrete acts of the Comintern and its sections, since its seventh Congress in the summer of 1935. To do so it is necessary to recapitulate and reaffirm a number of positions which are axiomatic for all Marxists, for all revolutionaries in the labor movement. This repetition of the obvious is made necessary because since the seventh Congress the CI, with increasing frequency and crudeness, has been acting in utter disregard and even contempt of the principles of Communism in regard to bourgeois democracy and imperialist war. Besides, it is necessary to call attention to certain basic ideas and principles in order to see more clearly the sinister significance of the practical application of the newest line of the Comintern in the struggle against fascism and imperialist war.

In the days before the seventh World Congress, Marxists and Communists never spoke of democracy in the abstract. They always realized that there is no such thing as pure democracy in a society divided into classes. Today, the official Communists seem to have forgotten, or at least act as if they had never learned, that modern history knows two kinds of democracy: the capitalist democracy of the type we have in the USA, Great Britain, and France; and the proletarian democracy of the type we have in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it had always been the contention of all communists – those in the Comintern as well as those in the International Communist Opposition – that, as the class struggle sharpens, the mask of bourgeois democracy is discarded and reveals capitalist dictatorship in its open ugly, brutal form – Fascism. Until recently, the official Communists went along with us in pointing out the organic connection between the capitalist dictatorship known as ‘democracy’ and the capitalist dictatorship known as ‘Fascism’. Time and again Earl Browder himself pointed out how false it is to conclude that ‘Fascism is the opposite of capitalist democracy’ or that ‘this democracy is the means of combating and deflating fascism’. On countless occasions, the Party members were taught that it is impermissible to counterpose ‘democracy against dictatorship’ and that ‘capitalist democracy is not the enemy but the mother of Fascism, that it is not the destroyer but the creator of Fascism’ and that, while it is true that ‘Fascism destroys democracy’, it is criminal ‘to propagate the falsehood that democracy will destroy Fascism’.

But ‘Conditions Have Changed’

Perhaps the official Party leadership will explain that ‘conditions have changed’ since Hitler triumphed in Germany. Would they have Communists believe that, since Fascism conquered Germany, bourgeois democracy is no longer a mechanism by means of which its victims are deluded into approving their continued status as an oppressed lower class? Certainly the comrades in the

leadership of the Comintern do not predicate their new attitude towards the capitalist democracies on the conclusion that, since Hitler came into power, England, France and the USA have become much more genuinely democratic in their relations to the working classes and the oppressed colonial masses in their empires.

Let us turn to the field of international politics, that is, the field of the international class struggle. Would the comrades in charge of the various sections of the Comintern have us believe that, in the event of a war between democratic France and Fascist Poland on the one side, and Fascist Germany on the other, that the French and Polish workers should become chauvinists and patrioteers and rally to their national colors in order to defeat Fascist Germany on the field of battle? Would comrades Browder and Hathaway, for instance, have Comrade X or Mr. Y, if he were elected to Congress, vote for the establishment of defensive naval bases in the Pacific in order to help defend democratic USA against 'fascist Japan'? And would Browder or Hathaway say that, in a war against Nipponese imperialism with the USSR lined up with the USA, the objectives of the Washington-Wall Street government would become non-imperialist or progressive?

Background of Present Course

The present ultra-right line of the Comintern may seem quite a long way from the ultra-left course which preceded it. Some may be at a loss to understand how it comes that the CI could swing from one extreme to the very opposite. There is no great distance traversed in this swing. First, extremes do meet. The fundamental approach is identical in the ultra-left line of yesterday and the ultra-right line of today. In both cases the Comintern has discarded the Marxist method of examining and evaluating mass movements and social struggles from the point of view of the dynamic of class relations.

An examination of both lines will reveal their blood-brotherhood and disclose the fact that the ultra-right line is only the ultra-left line standing on its head. In the days of the 'Third Period' and social fascism, in the ultra-left days of 'class against class', the French Socialist Party (SFIO) was held to be so bad that *the Comintern could see no difference between this Socialist Party of Blum and the Radical Party of Herriot*. Then the French Socialist Party was a 'bourgeois party'. Today, in the ultra-right period, in the days of the 'people against the two hundred families', the Radical Party has become so good that *the Comintern can again see no difference between the Radical Party of Daladier and the Socialist Party*.

In both cases, in both 'periods', the Comintern failed to measure in class terms. It, therefore, arrived at a false estimate in each instance. Here is the common root of the two types of errors, branching out in opposite directions.

In the ultra-left course, with its theory of social fascism, the Comintern refused to recognise *any* difference between bourgeois democracy and fascism. In those days all parties, with the exception of the official-Communist organizations, were labelled Fascist or branded social-fascist. Then, the CI went so far as to herald the arrival of a Fascist regime in Germany as an essential prerequisite for the 'revolutionization' of the masses. This description of policy is not a fantasy. It was printed in a 'Resolution of the Presidium of the Comintern on the Situation in Germany', after Hitler took power: 'The Communist Party was right in giving the name of social fascists to the Social Democrats. . . . The establishment of an open Fascist dictatorship, by destroying all the democratic illusions among the masses and liberating them from the influence of Social Democracy, accelerates the rate of Germany's development towards proletarian revolution'.⁵

When this outrageous stuff was gospel to the Comintern, all conflicts within and between bourgeois parties were considered sham battles. Compare this position with that of the American Party leadership in the last campaign when it sought to find *fundamental* differences between Roosevelt and Landon. A veritable one hundred and eighty-degree turn! There is nothing more fallacious than the conclusion that wrong policy turned on its head becomes correct policy.

Though the ultra-left theory prevented viewing class relations and divisions as they actually were, it had one redeeming feature. In the days before the seventh World Congress of the CI it was not only permissible but imperative for the various parties to stress the independent role of the proletariat as a class. Then, there was no loose talk about that fantastic and vague concept, the 'people'. The mistake then lay in the assumption that the Communist parties had already assumed the leadership of the working class. Thus, there resulted the fallacious substitution of the independent action of the Party as such for the independent action of the working class as a whole.

False Approach Persists

Applying an equally un-Marxian method today, and moved by despair over the defeats brought on by the ultra-left course, the Comintern has flown in panic to the ultra-right strategy of the people's front.

According to the people's front theory, Fascism is not a form of the rule of *the bourgeoisie as a class*, but rather the 'dictatorship of the most imperialist, the most chauvinist elements of finance-capital' (resolution of the seventh

5 *Communist International*, No. 8, 1 May 1933, pp. 245–6.

World Congress). Hence, in France, Fascism would appear to be a dictatorship of the wealthiest 'two hundred families'. In the USA, we shall perhaps soon be told that Fascism is a dictatorship of the famous 'four hundred' over all the rest of the capitalists as well as over all the workers and farmers!

Only on this basis can one comprehend the proposal to set up a united front of all the people which shall include not only the working class but also the petty bourgeoisie and that section of the capitalist class which does not belong to 'the most imperialist, the most chauvinist elements of finance-capital'. It is only on the basis of such an approach that the Communist Party of the USA could get out a special Christmas Day issue of its central organ, the *Daily Worker*, in which it declared editorially: 'The Pope was *ill-advised* in the utterance which he made' – the attack on world Communism.

In the same Christmas Day issue of the *Daily Worker*, there was featured *without comment or criticism* the following holiday greetings from a notorious gutter-champion of the papal struggle against Communism and the labor movement, Dorothy Day, editor of the *Catholic Worker*:

The *Catholic Worker* joins in an appeal for democracy and peace and, therefore, asks you to join in a protest against all dictatorships – fascist and bolshevist; against all suppression of civil liberty – fascist and bolshevist. That includes freedom of religious propaganda, education, and organization – against all war, whether imperialist, civil or class. Merry Christmas.⁶

This shameful anti-working-class epistle could appear in a paper calling itself communist *only on the basis of the people's front theory*. Is not Dorothy Day one of the 'people'? Is she not in favor of democracy? Is not the big thing today the 'struggle between democracy and Fascism'?

Democracy and Dictatorship

We cannot repeat too often that the evaluation of bourgeois democracy must be made realistically and, therefore, viewed in the light of the class conflicts of the decaying capitalist system. It is only because the Comintern failed to do so that its section in France demands the defense of declining bourgeois democracy there, that its sections in Germany and Italy demand the restoration and revitalization of their defunct capitalist democracy. It is only on this basis that the American CP could make its central slogan in the last presidential elections

⁶ *Daily Worker*, 25 December 1936.

the 'defense of democracy' in a country where the first job of the Communists and all class-conscious workers is to disillusion the masses with the 'virtues' of the prevailing system of bourgeois democracy. In short, in practice the people's front policy entails not merely a postponement of the struggle but even the abandonment of the agitation for the proletarian dictatorship *for an indefinite period*.

Do not our comrades in the Comintern see that only a golden age of capitalism could end the menace of Fascism, insofar as its objective roots go? No such age is in store for world capitalism. If the danger of Fascism is rooted in the decay of capitalism as a social and economic system, is the attack on the system to be abated in order to postpone the final symptoms of the disease? Certainly the struggle for proletarian dictatorship and for socialism must proceed steadily and grow throughout the period when bourgeois democracy is sick, if it is to be victorious over the rising Fascist forces.

Hence, to ask the proletariat to postpone the agitation or struggle for the proletarian dictatorship until the danger of Fascism is over, means to postpone it for a period as long as capitalism lasts. This can mean nothing else but giving up the struggle for proletarian dictatorship altogether and forever. The international working class is lucky indeed that the Soviet Union exists, to remind it of what a proletarian dictatorship is and should be. We can likewise be thankful for the heroic struggle in Spain where the workers and peasants are beginning to talk the only language the ruling classes and their Pope and Jesuit Order understand.

In view of the Comintern policies, particularly as applied today by the French CP, the ECCI should again turn to what Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

To make a united front against the bourgeois forces, the petty bourgeoisie and the workers had formed a coalition on their side, the so-called Social-Democratic Party. . . . February 1849, there were banquets to celebrate the reconciliation. A joint program was drafted, joint electoral committees were founded and joint candidatures were arranged for. The revolutionary point of view of the socialist demands of the proletariat was blunted and these demands were given a democratic gloss. Conversely, in the case of the democratic demands of the petty bourgeoisie, the purely political form was effaced, and they were made to seem as socialistic as possible.⁷

7 A somewhat different translation can be found in Marx 1975–2004a, pp. 129–30.

Marx was scathing in his criticism of the People's Front of 1849, even when bourgeois democracy was approaching its period of highest vitality and was not, as it is today, in its period of decline and decay. He denounced such collaboration even when the bloc was with a petty-bourgeois party (the Mountain) which resorted to armed insurrection against the big bourgeoisie, and not with a party like the present Radical Party of France which, though it has a mass petty-bourgeois following, is completely dominated by the big bourgeoisie and has been the central governing party of French capitalism since the opening of the century. Let no one forget that the continued undermining of the democratic rights of the workers of France has generally come through government administrations dominated by the Radical Party.

Marxists are for collaboration with the petty bourgeoisie *under certain conditions* – so long as they are prepared to fight side-by-side with the proletariat against the big bourgeoisie, against monopoly capital. But this does not mean that we must line up with the small or bigger bourgeoisie for the purpose of defending and perpetuating capitalism as a social system, in the same sense that Marx and Engels were for collaboration with the petty bourgeoisie *when the central issue was that of a bourgeois revolution in Germany, when such a revolution was the next historical step forward*. However, today, the next forward step is not a bourgeois revolution, either in Germany, or France or Spain, but a proletarian revolution.

New Role of Bourgeoisie

It is wrong to conclude that, because the bourgeoisie played a progressive role against feudalism, they will, therefore, be able to play a progressive role in the struggle against Fascism. The fact that Fascism has certain features in common with medieval barbarism does not mean that the Hitler or Mussolini regime spells a return to feudalism, an abandonment of the *capitalist* base of society. Fascism is only the outward or political expression of capitalism in complete decay. The very emergence of the Fascist movement proves that only a proletarian revolution can today guarantee and promote the progress of humankind. Therefore, in the struggle against fascism, the working class cannot have a *permanent* alliance with bourgeois parties and organizations – unless, of course, the working class gives up the struggle against capitalism as a system in decay.

It is significant that, in 1848 when the bourgeoisie was still able to play a revolutionary role, Marx and Engels did not go so far as the Comintern goes in its relations with petty and even bigger bourgeois outfits – today, when capitalism is declining as a world system! Today we are no longer in a situation where we can support the bourgeoisie in order to advance our own class interests.

The people's front strategy is in diametric opposition to the basic fact of the present world situation – the reactionary nature of the bourgeoisie as a ruling class and the reactionary nature of capitalism as a social system. Finally, the Comintern would do well to remember, and be guided by, the following position taken by the Communist League in Germany in 1850 – even when the bourgeoisie could, unlike today, still play somewhat of a progressive role: 'The workers' party will collaborate with the petty bourgeoisie against the reactionaries whom both aim to overthrow, but it will oppose the petty bourgeoisie on all issues pertaining to the working class'. For one thing, this precludes a permanent bloc even with the petty bourgeoisie; it prohibits the postponement or repression of working-class issues and interests; it assumes as a prerequisite for such a temporary coalition the actual engagement of the petty bourgeoisie in a fight against the reactionaries. In none of the requirements does the people's front fulfil these elementary conditions. It violates all of them – at the workers' expense.

2 Some Distortions and Misconceptions

Due to the course now being pursued by the Comintern, many workers in and around the revolutionary labor movement are subjected to the weirdest notions about the so-called people's front. At this time, when the people's front strategy is being so widely discredited in Spain and France, it is especially appropriate to clear up some misconceptions spread and some illusions fostered in regard to this course by the various sections of the CI as well as by such self-styled left organizations as the American Socialist Party.

An Old Disease – A New Name

To many, the people's front strategy appears as something new, as a policy just discovered or invented by the Comintern to suit the new situation growing out of the Hitler victory in Germany. This is a misconception pure and simple. The people's front policies now being pursued by the Comintern and the Socialist (Second) International are not really new. They are old. They are the moth-eaten policies of working-class coalition with the bourgeoisie at the expense of the real interests of the proletariat. The people's front is class collaboration under a new name. It is the pre-war 'cabinet-socialism' re-baptised; it is the old game of coalition with the bourgeoisie dressed up in a new uniform.

Yet it must be admitted that there is something new to this people's front. In the past, when coalition or collaboration with capitalist parties was applied by the Social Democracy, as in Germany for instance, the Communist parties

vigorously repudiated and fought it. Today, the official Communists not only do not fight it, but they endorse it. They not only endorse it, they even boast of having initiated it; they support it and take full responsibility for it before the masses. In the past, the conservative Social-Democratic leaders were somewhat slowed down in their pace of surrendering working-class interests upon the demands or under pressure of the bourgeoisie, because they feared the effects of Communist criticism and opposition in the ranks of the masses. Today, on the basis of the people's front policy, the reformists have a free hand to proceed with their policies of neglect and disregard of working-class interests, because the Communist parties have been drawn into the 'great coalition', into the national front, as it were.

One need but examine the events in Spain and France for a painful confirmation of our estimate. The swing to the right at the last congress of the French Radical Party, the more severe demands it is making on the workers as a price of collaboration – after about a year of the people's front with the Communist and Socialist parties – should be a source of enlightenment even to those least eager to see the truth. That is how the people's front undermines the workers' rights and fails to swing the middle-class masses to the left!

Deliberate Distortion of Issue

As already emphasised, the theory of the people's front is this: humanity, society and civilization in every country is today confronted with one big struggle and one decisive choice. That struggle and that choice today is between bourgeois democracy – or just democracy to the social reformists like Leon Blum – and Fascism. Blum puts it plainly as a struggle on behalf of the principles of 1789, that is, 'a glorious battle' for the maintenance and preservation of the principles of the French bourgeois revolution of 1789. Lots of things have happened since 1789 – even to France, although its Premier and his Communist apologists may not be fully aware of the changes or may choose to give the world the impression that nothing has happened. These 'great and glorious principles' of 1789 did not drop down on France from the heavens; they did not arise or flourish in a vacuum. These 'ideas and ideals' grew out of certain economic conditions, were rooted in certain social relations, had a certain type of class foundation, flourished in a certain kind of material soil. All of these are no more, due to more than a century of socio-economic developments.

Nor is fascism an accidental gift or curse from heaven. It is a legitimate offspring of the very democracy which the Socialist Blum and the Communist Thorez now ask the workers to defend by collaboration with such a capitalist party as the Radical Party, even when the latter sets as a condition for such collaboration the 'suppressing of the stay-in strikes, balancing the budget and

achieving monetary stabilization' and strangling the Spanish Revolution with an arms embargo.

How better could the ground for fascism be prepared by the leadership of the French Socialist and Communist parties than through their acceptance of these demands of the Radical Party? What are these but demands which rob the French workers of their most effective strike weapon, shift the burden of the devaluation of the franc onto the backs of the toilers and help ensure the victory of Fascism in Spain, a victory which would inevitably stimulate and encourage tremendously Colonel de la Rocque's advance in France?

Obviously, the workers are not choosing here. A bed of thorns and cold graves are being prepared for them by their own leaders who have adopted suicidal policies. Most of all, these policies have been adopted in a period when that form of capitalist dictatorship known as bourgeois democracy is becoming increasingly ineffective as an instrument of class domination over the workers, at the very time when bourgeois parliamentarism has outlived all political usefulness and at the moment when the faith of the masses in parliamentary institutions is ebbing rapidly. At such a time when the most favorable objective situation exists for pitting genuine working-class democracy (proletarian dictatorship) against capitalist parliamentary democracy, the Communist parties and revolutionary Socialists and Social-Democrats are denying themselves the right to propagate and work for the proletariat's taking over all power and putting an end to the very conditions in which Fascism is rooted.

In short, precisely at that moment when bourgeois parliamentary democracy has become so feeble and discredited that the capitalists themselves are turning to counterrevolutionary anti-parliamentarism as a new type of dictatorship (Fascism), do the official-Communist and Socialist parties completely turn their backs upon the revolutionary anti-parliamentarism of the working class as a way out? Would the Blums and the Browders, the Thorezes and the Thomases have us believe that when and if capitalist democracy gets stronger it will then be a more favorable time for us to propagate and work for the achievement of working-class democracy? Or shall we conclude that Browder and Thorez now agree with Blum and Thomas that the proletarian dictatorship is no democracy at all, is not working-class democracy? Sometimes the leaders of the official-Communist parties outside the USSR talk and act in this way. What choice or leadership are they really offering the proletariat in these critical hours? Are they not helping the reformist leaders to create artificially a choice which is no choice at all, which does not remove the source and soil of Fascism, a choice which only paves the way for a Fascist victory in one form or another?

People's Front is Not United Front of Labor

In the desperate effort to get and hold working-class support for the people's front course, the Socialist and Communist leadership have desperately and systematically confused it with the strategy of the united front of labor. They would have us believe that united action, the joint struggle of working-class organizations for the achievement of some specific concrete immediate interest or objective (regardless of differences over certain principles amongst the labor organizations) is synonymous with working-class organizations collaborating with capitalist organizations on the basis of a program of maintaining capitalism in the garb of bourgeois democracy. To confuse the united front of labor against the employing class interests or the capitalist government with the people's front under whose very eyes, nose and ears the Spanish Fascists prepared their armed insurrection, or with the people's front just decreed by the Radical Party congress in France, is the sheerest political idiocy. One might as well identify the great French general strike of 12 February 1934, which broke the Fascist onslaught and was a true united front of labor, with the proposals of Salengro, Blum, Duclos, Thorez, Daladier and Herriott to the French workers, at the height of the strike wave, to stop strikes, to discontinue occupying factories, and to support compulsory arbitration.⁸

People's Front is No Workers' Government

... Let no one overlook the following very important differences between a people's front government and a proletarian united-front government: our attitude towards a united front working-class government is based on its being an experiment necessary for *eliminating* the very last remnants of bourgeois-democratic illusions among the workers. With the people's front government strategy, the objective is the very *opposite* – *to prolong and preserve* the decaying bourgeois-democratic system, parliamentary capitalist democracy and all the illusions the workers may entertain.

We can properly support a united front working-class government under the condition that *it grants us full freedom of action to prepare for the struggle for power and Communism*. With the people's front government, however, we face a totally different situation. Here the bourgeoisie allows us to go into

8 Roger Salengro and Leon Blum were leaders of the French Socialist Party, Jacques Duclos and Maurice Thorez were leaders of the French Communist Party, Edouard Daladier and Edouard Herriott were leaders of the reform-oriented yet pro-capitalist Radical Party – and all joined together to draw the general strike into non-revolutionary channels, a precursor of the People's Front. – *Editors*

partnership with it and to support its 'mild' government on the condition that *the workers do not fight even for their immediate demands*, that they give up the weapon of sit-down strikes and occupation of the factories, drop all extra-parliamentary actions, and pledge loyalty to bourgeois law and order . . .

In a proletarian united-front government, *all bourgeois parties are excluded*, but in a people's front government spokesmen of *the bourgeoisie are not only included but have the final veto power*. Carried to its logical conclusion, a people's front government leads to a national-front government – a French front as proposed by the French CP . . .

Confusion No Road to Victory

Too many Socialists and Communists have joined the chorus of capitalist confusionists in speaking of democracy, Communism, Socialism, Fascism and capitalism – all in one breath, as if they were categories of the same type. This is confusion worse confounded – and it is primarily at the expense of the workers.

When we speak of Communism and Socialism on the one hand and capitalism on the other, we are speaking of and comparing or contrasting *social systems*. When we speak of democracy we do not speak of it in the abstract. It is either capitalist democracy or working-class democracy. When we speak of capitalist democracy and compare it with Fascism we are not comparing social systems but types of dictatorships, *forms of state*, utilised by entire ruling classes to maintain their power, to help continue a certain type of social system. Thus, we have the identical social system (capitalism) prevailing in England, France, the USA, Germany and Italy, yet we have parliamentary capitalist democracy serve as the instrument, as the form of capitalist dictatorship in the first three countries, and the Fascist dictatorship as the instrument of the defense and perpetuation of capitalism in the last two . . .

6 What is to be Done?

To speak of Fascist victory in France, or any other capitalist country as a certainty, is utter folly. We underscore this despite the fact that decaying capitalism with its declining parliamentary democracy itself provides the soil in which this twentieth-century savagery sprouts. It is within the power of the working class, it is possible for the labor movement to resort to its positive program to beat back and crush Fascism. In such a struggle, the course pursued by the most class-conscious section of the movement of labor, the Communists, is often decisive.

In our approach to the present false line of the Comintern, we are concerned solely with the fate of the entire working class – the only class that is historically capable of being progressive today. In this spirit we have made our criticism. It is in this spirit that we propose to show a way out – a different road. While our main emphasis here will be placed on positive tactics to be pursued in France, the essence of our practical positive approach is applicable to all bourgeois countries – with modifications necessary to meet the specific, concrete conditions prevailing in each country. Never must it be forgotten that while the principles of communism are international, the tactics applied to win the majority of the proletariat for these world principles must necessarily differ in each country on the basis of the differences in existing class relations.

A Program for France

In France, the CP should begin to turn away and win the working class away from the People's Front so that there may be created the political and organizational prerequisites for shifting from the present policies of parliamentary bourgeois-democratic coalition to the field of determined extra-parliamentary struggles for immediate demands. Thus only can the workers and the situation be prepared gradually for revolutionary struggle for workers' councils (soviets). Such a shift implies dropping the idea that capitalist democracy can be used as the instrument through which Fascism can be defeated. Such a shift inevitably leads to pitting proletarian revolution (socialism plus soviets), and not capitalism plus bourgeois democracy, against Fascist counterrevolution.

Obviously, this shift to the revolutionary position is not something that can be completed in one stroke. It is not something that can be shot out of a pistol with one trigger-pull. A period of preparatory rising struggles is required. It is not a question of proletarian revolution in France today; it is a question of the course to be pursued: whether the conditions will gradually be prepared for revolution tomorrow, or whether the working class will be so led as to be disarmed and robbed of its consciousness as a distinct class along with the possibility for proletarian revolution even the day after tomorrow.

The focal point of immediate struggle is: to repel all attempts of the capitalists to shift the burdens of the crisis or the contradictions of the present economic system onto the backs of the workers. This defensive fight must gradually be developed into an offensive struggle to make big capital – and not labor and the lower-middle class – shoulder these burdens. In France, this struggle is tied up vitally with the task of the physical disarming of the fascists. German, Austrian, Spanish and now French experiences show that this disarming can be achieved only through working-class organization and action.

The workers must zealously be on guard against all attempts to reduce their own democratic rights. It is highly significant to note that in all bourgeois countries the capitalists of the liberal stripe have consistently put through the reduction of these democratic rights of labor through the plea that such a reduction (through emergency decrees, etc.) is necessary to save the entire parliamentary system from Fascism. Labor must never lose sight, as these experiences reveal, of the decisive difference between its fighting for its own right of organization, assembly and press and its fighting for the preservation and perpetuation of capitalist democracy as a system.

The decisive weapon of the struggle here is extra-parliamentary mass action which is not inhibited or limited by regard for the bourgeois state or concern for the capitalist economy. Concrete actions of this sort must be adjusted solely to the strength of our own class, to the prevailing class relations. No serious defense of the living standards, working conditions or democratic rights of the workers is possible as long as the parties and organizations of the working class are tied up with the bourgeoisie in a coalition. We have seen time and again, in country after country, how the working class has been hampered in this struggle by the people's front because the labor organizations are gagged and bound by concern for and responsibility to their bourgeois coalition partners. This tie-up makes it very difficult or even impossible for the proletariat to develop the necessary class consciousness or spirit of unity, inevitably engendered by the struggle for immediate demands.

What is more, it is only through such militant struggles against big capital that the petty bourgeoisie can be won as allies for the workers. In the present stage of capitalist economy no effective aid for the great mass of the middle class is possible without an assault against the big bourgeoisie and their economic base. This necessarily means that, especially in France today, the slogan of workers' control of production must be raised vigorously and consistently. To give life to this demand, there must be built broad united-front organs, inclusive of the factory committees and directly tied up with the lower petty-bourgeois bodies – especially in the rural areas. The heart of this united front is, of course, to be found in the joint action of the SP, the CP and the trade unions. Only such a firmly welded united front of the proletariat can effectively appeal to, and work with, some of the lower organizations of the Radical Party ready to revolt against the Daladiers, the Herriots, and the Chautemps. This united-front movement has tremendous tasks to perform in the field of struggle against the dire hardships of devaluation faced by the working class and the petty bourgeoisie. This united front should organize the physical disarming of the Fascist bands and not rely on the paper laws in the statute books. It must take the most vigorous measures for the lifting of the blockade against Spain.

Apparently, such a program involves the energetic revival of Communist fractions working constructively in all the mass organizations. It entails setting up factory councils throughout the country coordinated on a national basis. No effort should be spared by the labor organizations in defense of the weapon of sit-down strikes or occupation of the factories. No energy should be spared in getting a repeal of the anti-strike law enacted by the people's front government in the form of a compulsory arbitration act, so traditionally odious to labor throughout the world. A fight must be made to replace the compulsory strike-arbitration law with a law to compel the big bourgeoisie to make loans to the government for public works and for aid to the farm-workers and impoverished farmers.

The French CP should take the initiative in organizing self-defense groups of proletarians against the consistently recurring Fascist attacks. On the same basis, joint committees of workers, farm-workers and the petty bourgeoisie should be set up to fight against the effects of devaluation.

The left forces in both the Socialist Party and the Communist Party should organize themselves to have their parties apply the strategy here outlined.

Once the Communist Party drops the People's Front, it will return to the fulfilment of its elementary duty of combining Communist propaganda with striving for these immediate objectives. It will thus prepare the ground for revolutionary transition slogans and a struggle for the reorganization of economy on a socialist basis, for the ultimate aims of Communism.

Towards a Sound Program in the USA

In the USA, dropping the people's front would mean, first of all, a return to a sound attitude towards the labor party movement. Instead of chasing the tails of pacifist preachers and playing around with the 'Father Divine' type of liberators of the oppressed, the CP would throw its full energies into mobilizing labor in struggle for a realistic social security program, for arousing labor to the dangers lurking for it in the sundry proposals for government interference in the trade-union organizations.

Once the stifling people's front psychology is discarded, its poisonous influence on the activities of Communist Party members in the trade unions will be ended. . . .

The mighty wave of strikes organized by the unions belonging to the Committee of Industrial Organization affords the Communists an extraordinary opportunity of aiding in the reconstruction of the trade-union movement, in the birth of a militant labor movement.

To the comrades of the Communist and Socialist parties, it is imperative to further point out that the sooner they bring about the abandonment of the people's front strategy, the more will the working class of this country be able

to take advantage of the present favorable opportunities for building their organizations and improving their living conditions. . . .

The Crisis in World Communism – An Evaluation

. . . We are not sounding false alarms. We are issuing sound and timely warnings. When we raise this cry, when we signalize this danger to the life of our movement, we do it only out of the deepest concern for the principles that bind Communists together throughout the world, for the principles that have served as the basis of our separation from reformism. We are confident that, if the memberships of the various sections of the Communist International were given half a chance to examine freely and critically the present dangerous tactical course of the Comintern, then this reformist, ultra-right policy could not and would not be maintained.

That is why we have emphasized, and will continue to emphasize, the need for establishing genuine Party democracy, thoroughgoing democratic centralism, throughout the sections of the Communist International, for establishing a collective international leadership in the CI as the means with which not merely to unify the ranks of the world-Communist movement but as the most effective means for overcoming such grave errors and preventing the recurrence of such suicidal mistakes. It is such mistakes in strategy and tactics that are now threatening to undermine the very foundations of the international Communist movement.

As long as such flagrant abandonment of Communist principles prevails, it will be impossible to attain unity between the ranks of the Comintern and the ranks of the International Communist Opposition. Today, the prerequisite for Communist unity is more than a return to Party democracy and collective international leadership in the CI. Today, the first prerequisite for sound Communist unity is a return to those principles of Communism which the Comintern and its sections have recently abandoned or put in cold storage.

Hence, we call upon all workers sympathetic to the Communist Party and those who are members of the Communist Party to end their silence and begin to fight openly against the ultra-right course, a course which will lead to disaster – as surely as the ultra-left line led to a debacle in Germany and elsewhere. We are not afraid of being attacked for sounding the alarm. Nor should any other workers be afraid of any abuse that may be heaped on them. Infinitely greater sacrifices will have to be made by all of us in the interest of preserving and extending the ideas and ideals of world Communism, of world labor.

We call upon comrades in and around the Communist Party to join our ranks so that we may together speed the day of a reunified, sound Communist

movement in this country and throughout the world. Today, every Communist who desires to fight effectively and consistently for Communist principles and policies should enroll in the ranks of the Communist Party (Opposition).

The American and international labor movements are living through critical and decisive hours. Every workingman and workingwoman should be aware of the great possibilities as well as the serious dangers at hand. In the ranks of the International Communist Opposition, in the ranks of the Communist Party (Opposition) of this country, there is that possibility for guidance, that inspiration so necessary for ensuring the defeat of all capitalist reaction, the victory of the workers of all countries. To join our ranks, to work along with us, is to hasten the day of the sound unification of world Communism and of the unity and triumph of the international working class.

2. The Truth about the Barcelona Events⁹

Bertram D. Wolfe and 'Lambda'

Introduction

The proletariat of Barcelona is the backbone of the Spanish Revolution. It was they who saved Spain from Fascism in July of last year [1936]. While the Republican Government vacillated and temporised for three days (17, 18 and 19 July), refused to dissolve the army in rebellion, refused to call upon the soldiers to disobey their officers, refused to arm the proletariat and tried to negotiate an 'honorable' surrender to the Fascist rebellion, it was the Barcelona proletariat, armed only with pistols, rifles taken from sporting goods stores and stones and clubs and following the lead of syndicalists, anarchists and POUMists [members of the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* – United Marxist Workers Party], who stormed the Barcelona barracks. Thereby they changed the history of Spain, perhaps the history of our times.

The heroic 'storming of the heavens' by the Barcelona workers on 19 July inspired the Madrid proletariat to take the Montaña Barracks on 20 July. The entire army had revolted, but the working class began to build a new workers' army. The Republican, People's Front Government had betrayed them, but they went into battle on their own account. But now, reformism in Madrid and anarcho-syndicalism in Barcelona prevented them from consolidating their victory by the taking over of power. The syndicalists, burdened by the weight of anarchist prejudices, did not know how to take power. The Communist Party, blinded by the anti-Communist theory of the people's front, opposed the retention of power, insisted upon the rehabilitation of the discredited, vacillating and treacherous bourgeois republicans, fought against the socialization of industry (even capitalist nations take over industry for war purposes), opposed the freeing of the Moors which would have smashed Franco at the start, opposed the nationalization of the land which would have destroyed the

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social roots of Fascism, insisted on the retention of unreliable bourgeois generals who later betrayed strongholds like Malaga, opposed the development of a genuine workers' army, insisted upon the preservation of capitalism with its Fascist sympathies ('The Fifth Column'), and, by the inevitable logic of their errors, ended up by assuming an armed offensive against the revolutionary workers and their organizations on 3 May 1937.

Step by step, bourgeois reaction has lifted its head again. It supports and swells the ranks of the official Communist Party and hides behind it as once German capitalism hid behind [Philip] Scheidemann and [Gustav] Noske [German Social Democrats who helped block a workers' revolution in Germany in 1918–19]. It enjoys secret support from France and England against its own working class. It counts on conservative elements within the Spanish Socialist Party. Its spokesmen make dark and mysterious hints about a possible truce or compromise. Its latest government, the [Juan] Negrín Cabinet [a People's Front coalition of moderate Socialists, Communists, and pro-capitalist liberals], freed at last of the UGT and CNT, the two powerful trade-union centers, proposes openly the following program:

1. Restore freedom of worship in all churches . . .
2. Return all business to its owners with the exception of certain large industries important for war purposes.

It closes the headquarters of the revolutionary party, the POUM, suppresses POUM, anarchist, and syndicalist papers, but would reopen the churches, centers of counter-revolutionary propaganda and even fortified machine-gun nests of reaction!

Without even waiting for the end of the war, so bitter is its enmity to socialism, it would dislodge the workers' organizations from industry and disorganize such war necessities as the food industry by returning it to private hands!

With Bilbao in danger, it does not hesitate to organize shock-troops for civil war (the *Carabineros*) and unleash attacks upon the workers' organizations behind the lines! It is more afraid of its own proletariat in arms than it is of its former instruments of power, the Fascist generals! Does it need an armed proletariat in order to be saved from Fascism? Then it would rather not be saved from Fascism! It knows what the Communist Party has forgotten: that Fascism and bourgeois democracy are but two forms of capitalism, but the proletariat in arms, the proletariat in power, spells the end of capitalism. Therefore it runs the risk of losing the war by attempting to disarm the proletariat of Barcelona that saved Spain from Fascism. It drives Largo Caballero [a left-wing Socialist]

out of office as too responsive to the will of the trade unions. It tries to outlaw the revolutionary party of the proletariat, the POUM. It drives the trade unions out of the government. It seeks to crush all obstacles in the way of dark compromise and open reaction.

With heads bowed in shame, we are forced to recognise that the Communist Party of Spain carried on the propaganda campaign paving the way for reaction. It branded the POUM as Trotskyite, although Trotsky attacks the POUM and the POUM Trotsky, and although the POUM has expelled its handful of Trotskyites. Ten thousand POUMists are fighting at the front out of a party of fifty thousand, but the POUMists are 'agents of Franco'. And the heroic workers of Barcelona who saved Spain from Franco, when they resist disarmament, are also 'agents of Franco'. Things have come to such a pass that the [Stalinist] writings of a [Harry] Gannes, a [George] Marion or a [Mikhail] Koltzev outdo those of bourgeois journalists in pen-prostitution and hatred and slander of the leaders of the Spanish proletarian revolution.

The revolutionary workers of America, unable to trust the official-Communist or bourgeois press, have waited anxiously for reliable news on the 'May Days' in Barcelona. The present report by comrade Lambda, first published in the columns of the *Workers Age*, is the news we have been waiting for. It is more than reporting; it is a masterpiece of Marxist historical analysis. Despite its brevity, despite the problems of censorship, distance and distortion of news, Lambda has succeeded in establishing in a single dispatch, the class forces involved, the role of parties and organizations and the underlying historic import of the May struggles in Catalonia. He has redeemed the honor of Marxist journalism besmirched by official-Communist newspapers, and has renewed the great tradition set by Marx and Engels in the reporting of the French and German revolutions of 1848. The *Workers Age* is proud of the fact that this modern classic first appeared within its pages, proud also of being a reliable source of information on the most important events taking place in the world today, the events that, taken together, comprise the proletarian revolution in Spain.

Bertram D. Wolfe

The Truth about the Barcelona Events

Lambda

19 May 1937

1 *About the May Struggles in Catalonia*

What was behind the fighting which took place in Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia during the first week of May is becoming constantly clearer in the light of additional reports and the actions of the various parties and organizations involved. The most important facts may be summarized in a few paragraphs.

The fighting began on Monday 3 May, with the attempt of the PSUC¹⁰ to occupy the telephone-exchange building in Barcelona, until then under the control of the CNT.¹¹ This action was based on a far-reaching and carefully constructed plan. The telephone-exchange buildings at Lerida, Gerona, Taragona, etc., were supposed to be simultaneously occupied and taken over. That all this was of the nature of provocation and conspiracy becomes perfectly obvious when it is remembered that the plan of the Catalonian government had been kept a dead secret – that is to say, Companys probably knew all about it but the plan was most assuredly kept secret from the CNT-FAI members of the government. Those who instigated the whole affair and then took action were the PSUC and the Communist Party of Spain and upon them falls the entire responsibility.

The revolutionary workers of Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia answered *spontaneously* with a general strike, erecting barricades and disarming the government troops. By Wednesday, the CNT-FAI were the unquestioned masters of the situation in Barcelona as well as the rest of Catalonia. A change in the situation occurred, however, because the leadership of the CNT and the FAI did not dare to carry through their victory by taking power into their hands. On Wednesday, the CNT and the FAI fell in with a strategic maneuver of the PSUC and the Esquerra,¹² intended as a ruse to assure the latter the upper hand. The CNT and the FAI ordered their members to cease armed struggle and bade them to return to work. Immediately thereafter, however, the well-armed formations of the PSUC renewed their attack. From Valencia, five thousand assault-guards as well as several warships were sent to Barcelona. With their

10 PSUC – United Socialist Party of Catalonia, the Comintern party of that country.

11 CNT – National Confederation of Labour, the anarcho-syndicalist trade-union federation.
FAI – Iberian Anarchist Federation.

12 Esquerra – a bourgeois-liberal party of Catalonia.

aid, the disarming of the revolutionary workers was carried out, a feat which could never have been accomplished in an open fight. Countless arrests and assassinations of anarchists, syndicalists and POUMists¹³ were carried out at once. The editorial staff of *La Batalla*, central organ of the POUM, was arrested. *La Batalla* itself was put under strictest preliminary censorship. The PSUC and the CP of Spain opened a fiendish drive to outlaw and dissolve the PODM. The Comintern press helped out very loudly.

Statements issued by Companys, President of Catalonia, reveal the fact that his appeals for assistance fell on deaf ears in Valencia until he ceded the Valencia government the right to take over all police functions as well as the high command of the Catalanian troops at the front – a piece of extortion aimed at the extinction of Catalanian autonomy. The leadership of the CNT-FAI reports that it sent a number of trustworthy persons to the CNT batallions on the Aragon front to persuade the soldiers not to leave the front for the purpose of intervening in the fighting at Barcelona. These emissaries prevailed and the soldiers remained at the front.

On Wednesday and Thursday, 5 and 6 May, a number of French and English warships appeared in the port of Barcelona in support of the counterrevolutionary provocation; evidently they had been summoned by Companys and Valencia. With this, the international connections of the counterrevolutionary coup became clearly established.

2 *The Manifesto Issued by the CNT, the FAI and the Libertarian Youth of Catalonia*

During the May events, there became clearly apparent for the first time the split between the masses of the anarcho-syndicalist workers who, weapon in hand, were defending their revolutionary gains, and certain leaders of the CNT and FAI, above all, the CNT cabinet ministers in the Valencia government and the Generalidad. These individuals proved themselves partly corrupt with opportunism and partly lacking in clarity of aim and determination. After the compromise maneuver had brought defeat to the revolutionary workers, there followed a violent reaction among the anarcho-syndicalist workers. This reaction is reflected in the manifesto of the leadership of the CNT, the FAI, and the Libertarian Youth of Catalonia, published in the 12 May issue of the *Solidaridad Obrera*.

13 POUM – Workers Party of Marxist Unity, the independent Communist party of Catalonia and Spain, which, unlike the official Communist Party, is following a really Communist policy in the Spanish Civil War.

This manifesto openly describes the provocation during the first days in May as 'a conspiracy'. This conspiracy – that is, the attack upon the telephone-exchange building – produced a spontaneous protest on the part of workers. The attack upon the telephone-exchange building was personally led by the PSUC official, Salas, who was under written orders from Aiguade, orders of which the Council of the Generalidad had no knowledge whatsoever. This coup was to be the starting point of a 'far-reaching plan of action with unqualified aims'.

The proclamation points out that this action had been prepared carefully over a long period of time and that part of these preparations had been to demoralise the hinterland and to undermine confidence in the committees and the leadership of the CNT. The proclamation goes on to point out the numerous assassinations of CNT members by the PSUC and the police troops – twelve in San Andres, fifteen in Taragona, the assassination of the Italian anarchist Berneri, etc. Another aim of the provocation was to bring about foreign intervention, 'the advance troops of which were represented by the six French and English war vessels that appeared on Wednesday and Thursday of the past week in the port of Barcelona'. The proclamation declares that, in view of the numerous arrests and individual assassinations perpetrated by their enemies, the CNT and the FAI would find a 'way for proper retribution, should such practices not cease at once'.

The proclamation appeals to the members of the UGT¹⁴ in the following words:

Remember that your place is on the side of your class comrades and not in alliance with the bourgeoisie, either big or little, which is defending its own interests and is fighting with every means and weapon available to throttle the Spanish Revolution.... Stand fast against all provocations and against all those perpetrating such provocations! Work together with us in our common task of exposing the guilty ones in this, the biggest crime in history. Let us unite against the common enemy, the enemy within and without, the enemy at the front and at home, the enemy who is plotting against us in every hole and corner of Spanish politics and in every dark corridor of the government offices of Europe.... Long live the revolutionary alliance of the proletariat! Down with the

14 UGT – General Union of Workers, the trade-union federation in which Socialists and Communists are active.

counterrevolution! Long live the unity of the CNT and the UGT, the only safeguard for victory in the war and in the revolution!

The slogan of the revolutionary alliance of the proletariat is equivalent to the slogan issued by the POUM for a revolutionary workers' front. The proclamation of the CNT reveals that the anarcho-syndicalist workers have begun to learn the lesson of the recent events and that they are determined to continue the fight for the revolution.

3 *The Position of the POUM on the May Battles*

The attitude of the POUM on the May battles is formulated in the resolution adopted by the Enlarged Central Committee of the party after the May events, published on 13 May in *La Batalla*:

1. The unceasing provocations of the counterrevolution, embodied in the reformist parties of the PSUC and the petty bourgeoisie – provocations aimed at liquidating in the spheres of economy, war and the public order the revolutionary gains won by the workers, weapon in hand, on 19 July, provocations which reached their climax on 3 May with the attempt to storm the telephone-exchange building – these provocations produced the armed protest of the proletariat.

2. The political position of the POUM could be none other than active solidarity with the workers who spontaneously declared a general strike, erected barricades in the streets of Barcelona and took it upon themselves to defend with exemplary heroism the endangered conquests of the revolution.

3. Since the workers fighting in the streets lacked concrete aims as well as responsible leadership, the POUM had no other alternative but to organize a strategic retreat by convincing the working class to avoid all desperate action that might have resulted in a putsch, inevitably leading to the complete extermination of the most advanced sections of the proletariat.

4. The experience of the May struggles has clearly shown that the only solution lies in the seizure of power by the working class and that it is therefore absolutely necessary for the revolutionary activity of the working masses to be coordinated through the formation of a revolutionary workers' front uniting all organizations ready to fight for the complete annihilation of Fascism. This can be accomplished only through military victory at the front and the victory of the revolution at home.

The Central Committee of the POUM is of the opinion that the policy pursued by the party has been completely justified; it fully endorses the line of the Executive Committee, convinced that the party has defended the interests of the revolution and of the broad working masses.

4 *The Reorganization of the Valencia Government*

The reorganization of the Valencia government was instigated by the official-Communist Party, whose ministers resigned with the demand that the measures against the revolutionary workers of Catalonia be intensified and carried through to the end, as well as by the French and English governments which made their voice heard in the very cabinet through the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alvarez del Vayo.

The main objectives of this move were the elimination of Caballero and thus of the left socialists from the cabinet, the exclusion of the CNT-FAI, the strengthening of bourgeois-republican influence, the emancipation of the government from the control of working-class organizations, the centralization of military power in a single hand and the liquidation of the revolutionary achievements of the 'July Days' in Catalonia and the rest of Spain. The real nature of this move is best illustrated by a number of facts.

In its issue of 11 May, the paper *Adelante*, the organ of the VGT and of Largo Caballero personally, describes the demands raised by the CP of Spain and the Comintern in the following terms:

If the Caballero government were to apply the measures of suppression to which the Spanish section of the Communist International is trying to incite it, then it would come close to a government of Gil Robles or Lerroux; it would destroy the unity of the working class and expose us to the danger of losing the war and shipwrecking the revolution. . . . A government composed in its majority of people from the labor movement cannot make use of methods that are reserved for reactionary and fascist-like governments.

The article expressly rejects responsibility for the events in Catalonia and throws the responsibility upon those who provoked the situation.

The role that the French and English governments played in the Catalanian events and the aims pursued by these governments in the situation and in the reorganization of the Valencia government are exposed with welcome clarity in a semi-official editorial in the *Temps* of 17 May. This article was written after the governmental crisis in Barcelona had broken out into the open but before it had been solved; it was, therefore, written with a view to influencing the solution of the crisis in the direction desired by the People's Front government of France. The editorial goes on to say:

The struggle therefore proceeds in Valencia, as it went on in Barcelona, between the Communist influence, allied with the Socialists and

republicans, and the anarcho-syndicalists, whom it is a question of destroying and removing from the government. . . . Either Mr. Largo Caballero will simply rebuild his cabinet on the same foundations, that is, from the representatives of all of the People's Front parties and the socialist and anarcho-syndicalist labor organizations, or he will attempt to free the Republican Government from the control of the extremists by building up a combination basing itself entirely on the political parties of the People's Front. If this latter formula is applied, it will signify an important development; in fact, it will constitute a decisive reaction against the so-called proletarian socialist revolution. The anarchists and the syndicalists have never hidden the fact that the defense of the Republican regime and the democratic order is their least concern and that what they are above all trying to accomplish, on the basis of the present civil war is the complete social revolution for the sole benefit of the proletariat. The Republican Government of Valencia has reached the point where it must decide. It can no longer remain in the state of ambiguity in which it has hitherto lived. It must choose between democracy and proletarian dictatorship, between order and anarchy.

Corresponding to these directives of the French and English bourgeoisie, directives supported by the Spanish section of the Communist International, the republican parties and the right wing of the Social Democracy, a reorganization in the Valencia government has taken place. Caballero has been ousted. In the government the right wing only of Social Democracy is represented through Premier Negrin, the new War Minister Prieto, and the Minister of the Interior. The Foreign Ministry was handed over to the left republican, Giral, the chairman of the left-republican party, the man who was Premier until the fall of Irun and who was removed from the government precisely because of the fall of Irun. Now this political corpse has been resurrected. . . .

The CNT and the FAI have had their representatives ousted from the government, after they were offered half of their previous representation. The government now consists of three Socialists, two official Communists and four of the bourgeois parties. In reality, this government is dominated by bourgeois-republican influence since the right-wing Socialists, such as Prieto, must be regarded as bourgeois republicans. The UGT is officially not represented in the new government.

The new government was promptly hailed with great joy by the official press of England and France. From these quarters its tasks were openly prescribed for it. Thus the *Temps* writes in its editorial of 18 May:

But it is noteworthy that he (Azaña) yesterday assembled for the purposes of joint consultation the President of the Cortes, Mr. Martinez Barrio; the head of the Republican Union, the former Premier [José] Giral; the leader of the republican lefts; the leader of the moderate Socialists, Indalecio Prieto; Mr. Ramón Lamonedá; the representative of the leadership of the SP; and Mr. Jose Díaz, the General Secretary of the CP. It would be too early to conclude that the orientation in Valencia is toward a more moderate government determined to free itself finally from the control of anarcho-syndicalists. But this is an attempt which, in the end, will have to be made, no matter what the resistance of the extremists may be, if the collapse of the republican state power sooner or later is to be avoided.

From these words, the essence and aims of the new Valencia government emerge clearly. It is supposed to clean up the forces fighting for proletarian revolution, to disarm them, to destroy and annihilate them. It is supposed to create a firm basis, from a military and police standpoint, for a bourgeois restoration. These are the objectives but, in reality, the perspectives of such a government go far beyond what these people themselves understand or desire today. If this government continues to pursue its aims consistently, it must in the end undermine the foundations of its own existence, particularly of the Socialist and Communist parties. For, in order to destroy the revolutionary elements of the working class in Catalonia and the rest of Spain it will have to base itself more and more upon the powers of reaction and to apply constantly more reactionary measures – as is clearly pointed out in the declaration of Caballero's paper cited above. It is enough to refer to the example of German Social Democracy, to Ebert-Scheidemann-Noske, who, in order to smash the Spartacus League, had to rely on the military and White Guardist [right-wing] organizations. It is clear, furthermore, that were this government to succeed in realizing its objectives, the prerequisites for a compromise with the military-fascist insurgents would be created – something towards which the English and French governments have been working quite openly. This is a road that can end only in the collapse of the bourgeois-democratic republic – in the defeat of the struggle against the military-fascists at the front.

But there is by no means any guarantee that the new government and the forces behind it will succeed in realizing their objectives. The countercurrent in the Spanish working class has already begun; this can be seen from the appeals of the CNT-FAI as well as from the attitude of the UGT leadership. To assure the victory of the forces of proletarian revolution it is absolutely necessary to

create a firm alliance of all forces working in this direction and to develop a really communist leadership supported by the majority of the Spanish working class. For such a leadership we must turn, in the first place, to the POUM but also to certain elements among the anarcho-syndicalists and the SP lefts.

It is of the greatest significance that the five thousand men of the assault-guards sent by Valencia to Barcelona to 'restore order' have fallen under the influence of the revolutionary sentiment of the Catalanian workers, that the POUM is gaining in popularity among the workers and that the virtual abolition of Catalanian autonomy has created bad blood even amongst certain petty-bourgeois elements. As a whole, however, it must be said that the development of a revolutionary front fighting in the direction of proletarian power will be a long and difficult process. But it is the only road!

3. The Meaning of the Soviet 'Purges'¹⁵

Jay Lovestone

Even the most obedient and devout of official Communists must be somewhat bewildered by the latest events in the USSR, and we, who have been for years in opposition to the Stalin regime in the Comintern and to the entire hero-cult theory and practice that has afflicted the CPSU, do not hesitate to declare that we are profoundly disturbed by these events.

It is most unfortunate that there is so little objective material at hand and that one is, therefore, much handicapped in arriving at definite conclusions about a whole chain of incidents – beginning with the Zinoviev execution and so painfully dramatised a few days ago when seven generals and a marshal of the Red Army fell before a firing squad. The end is still not in sight.

We of the International Communist Opposition, we of its American affiliate, the Independent Communist Labor League, will officially evaluate the latest trend of developments in the USSR as soon as additional factual material is at hand. To attempt to arrive at a conclusion in the present frantic atmosphere and on the basis of the deliberate flight from reality by the leaders of the American CP and the Comintern would be utterly futile. To consider seriously the 'explanations' offered by Trotsky and his '-ites' would be equally suicidal from the point of view of objectivity.

Today, more than ever before, it is obvious to all that Stalinism is only Trotskyism standing on its head and that Trotskyism is only frustrated Stalinism inverted. Now more than ever in the past it is clear that we must continue to reject with redoubled conviction and vigour both Stalinism and Trotskyism as definitely detrimental to the best interests of the international working class.

With this in mind, the writer is taking the doubtful privilege of thinking aloud on behalf of himself – not for the organization – of giving his own individual opinions. I state frankly that my present ideas on the latest Russian events are tentative, incomplete and therefore subject to alteration, should

15 *Workers Age*, 3 July 1937, pp. 5–6.

subsequently obtained material or developments warrant it. However, even today, with all the obstacles still in the path of grasping what is really happening in the Soviet Union, certain facts and trends seem quite clear.

There is great discontent in the USSR. This is not occasioned by the ambitions of an individual seeking an outlet. Nor are we dealing here with a clique-conspiracy or with a handful of disappointed plotters who happened to have sneaked into the highest ranks of the leadership. It is certain that the discontent has widespread ramifications. There is not an agency of Soviet economic, political, cultural or military life that has not been seriously permeated with this dissatisfaction.

It is with the deepest regret that I must admit that there is an acute crisis in the regime, in the inner life of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Though the Gamarnik and other recent suicides and disappearances, though the execution of Tukhachevsky and his aides cannot be altogether separated from the Zinoviev and Radek trials, a sharp line of differentiation must be drawn between the two sets of events.

In the case of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek and Piatakov, we were dealing with veteran Party political leaders who, at one time or another, were in active opposition to Stalin and his general Party line. For reasons of factional conviction, they latter switched political positions to become, at least outwardly, sycophantic supporters of Stalin and vile calumniators of any and all people even mildly critical of Stalin. It is at least as little a tribute to Stalin as to these culprits themselves that Party morality had sunk so low that men of their calibre and careers could be forced to fall to such a level that they could outwardly worship at the Stalin shrine while they were inwardly completely opposed to their own words and deeds, and even secretly working for the overthrow of Stalin and his regime.

In the demotion, disgrace and disappearance of Yagoda, in the Gamarnik suicide, in the Tukhachevsky execution, we are concerned with a totally different situation. Here we are not dealing with individuals who willingly or otherwise made it a practice of lying to the Party for factional reasons or interests. Here we are dealing with individuals who for years were part and parcel – organic parts – of Stalin's administrative apparatus, vital cogs in the factional, party, military, and economic machines dominated by Stalin.

Of particularly sinister significance is, therefore, the fate which has befallen Rudzutak and Unshlikht. Both are veteran Bolsheviks, hewn of flint. Rudzutak entered the Political Buro simultaneously with Molotov and Voroshilov. He was one of the most reserved, quiet, cautious and capable of Bolshevik leaders. Rudzutak was a strong character, strong enough to join Bukharin, Tomsy and Rykov in voting in the Political Buro against the deportation of Trotsky. And

this at a time when he was in fullest accord with Stalin on his general economic line and inner-Party course! He was never associated in any way at all with the Trotsky or Bukharin oppositions. That people of such strong character should get themselves into so tragic a position in the life of the Party shows with painful clarity the fatal folly of a Party regime of the type hammered out by Stalin. In a regime under which people are compelled to say and repeat with synthetic glee what they do not mean, what they actually disapprove, it is impossible to avoid a situation in which people make it a practice of not meaning what they say.

I personally reject the explanation of events given by Stalin and his supporters. This explanation is unacceptable to me on the ground that it is too simple and much too sordid. It does not account for the profound transformation of individuals on which it is based. Certainly, if we assume, for the sake of argument only, that Yagoda, Rudzutak and Unshlikht have become what Stalin now says they are, then they must have gone through a certain transition stage on this road. Obviously, during this transition stage they were part, and a very important part, of the topmost cadre of the Stalin leadership.

Here Stalin faces a double dilemma. Would he be prepared to confess that people, in the process of transformation from Bolsheviks to Nazis, individuals in the transition from Bolshevism to Fascism, could possibly constitute so vital a part of his leadership? Would he be prepared to confess that his regime was of a kind that could so easily harbour, nurse and proclaim such leaders as demigods? Or would Stalin confess that his regime is of the kind that puts forward individuals who can suddenly leap from Communism to Fascism? Frankly, even if Stalin were to make such confessions, I would not believe them. With all my criticism of Stalin's regime, I do not think it ever was, or is today, of a sort that could, gradually or suddenly, produce the transformation of Old Bolsheviks into Nazis. That there are lots of spies of foreign governments in the USSR must be taken for granted. That there are more of them today than in the past because of the explosive international situation must likewise be taken for granted. These facts in themselves do not prove that Stalin's closest collaborators and his most confidential secretaries, all with years and years of unquestionable service, have become, overnight, through some alchemist's magic, Hitler spies.

If we cast a retrospective glance at Russian Party developments, we will find that it was entirely natural and understandable – especially under the circumstances of the stifling inner-Party regime headed by Stalin – that the logic of the political positions of Trotsky or of Zinoviev, Radek and Kamenev, should lead them to an out-and-out anti-Soviet course. However, it is obviously absurd to ask us to believe that suddenly, mysteriously, Yagoda, Tukhachevsky, Gamarnik

and Rudzutak became degenerates, became mortal foes of the Soviet Union, became agents of German and Japanese imperialism. Only two days before Gamarnik committed suicide, he was elected to the executive of the Moscow Party committee – the second highest committee in the Party. Whatever complaint one may lodge against Stalin, certainly it is not one of such slowness, incompetence and dereliction in ferreting out enemies of socialist Russia or of his own regime.

If even one-tenth of the accusations and indictments levelled against these men were true, the situation would then have within it a much more grave indictment of Stalin and his system of leadership than that now hurled at the accused. There would have to be something very foul in the Soviet situation if the men who have for years given their all to the proletariat, who have for years, under the eagle-eye and direct supervision of Stalin himself, directed the most responsible work, changed, as if at one stroke, from servants of the cause of the world revolution into agents of the Fascist scourge.

We have been critical of Stalin and his regime. Today I am still more critical of him. Yet, in the light of his great contributions to the growth and progress of the USSR and to the cause of the international labor movement, I cannot conceive of him as primarily responsible for the generation of so monstrous a situation – a situation in which those in charge of the Bolshevik education of the Red Army are really the tools of the Nazi hangmen. I refuse to conclude that Stalin can be so obtuse in his judgment of people, so bankrupt in his choice of those worthy of trust. I say this despite the character of the leadership he has imposed on the various sections of the Communist International and despite his elevation to very high posts of such people as Yezhov and Agranov.

Far be it from me to assume at any time even the slightest responsibility for the past, present or future of any individual in any factional struggle in the Russian Party. All of them, of every faction, have persistently, systematically and scrupulously kept in the dark or even misinformed the members of the other sections of the Comintern about issues and figures in the various inner-Party struggles since the death of Lenin. Still, it must be said that even weirdest fantasy is defied by the charge that Yagoda, Gamarnik, Tukhachevsky and their colleagues, occupying key positions in the Red Army's line of defense, became Hitler and Japanese agents. I reject as generally untrue and as largely unfounded the accusations against these people. In doing so, I am not assuming any responsibility for what they ever did or failed to do. Likewise, in doing so I am paying no tribute to Stalin. I am face to face with a Hobson's choice. I pick only the lesser of two very serious evils. That Stalin is an expert of trumping up charges against opponents or potential opponents is not new to us. Nevertheless, here I must stress we deal with a more flagrant type of frame-

up than has ever been perpetrated in factional struggle. To me the recent demotions, arrests, accusations, suicides and executions mark the low point of the Stalin hero-cult. To me, they emphasize that the scoundrel- or culprit-cult is but an inevitable and inseparable phase – only the reverse side of the hero-cult.

How, then have these horrifying events come about? Why now? What do they portend? What can we in the independent revolutionary proletarian movement outside of the USSR do about contributing to the fundamental improvement of the Soviet situation?

There has been a decisive improvement in the economic conditions of the USSR, the socialist base of the Soviet economy has been strengthened tremendously. The immediate situation, in so far as availability and quality of consumer goods go, has improved vastly for the great mass of the Soviet population. Despite all reports of widespread breakdown and calamity now being spread in the columns of the Soviet press, one must register great satisfaction at the constant progress which has been made by Soviet heavy industry. In underscoring these trends, I do not for a moment want to give the impression that Soviet economy is already completely socialist in character, that the problems of productivity, efficiency, skill, quality and quantity have already been solved.

Without in the least challenging the fundamental socialist character and health of Soviet economy and while definitely underscoring our continued conviction that regardless of the great cost, stress and strain, the first and second Five-Year Plans were historically necessary and were great boons not only to the Russians but also to the entire international proletariat, I am prepared to recognise the fact that the Soviet economy still has, in many respects, much to learn from the technique of the most efficient capitalist countries. Just as it was imperative to accept with reserve and considerable scrutiny the paeans of praise sung by the Stalinist press over the unattained achievements in the heroic days of the first Five-Year Plan, so is it necessary today to accept the latest alarm- and panic-cries of Stalin about the disastrous results of criminal Trotskyist saboteurs with more than a grain of salt.

Precisely this great economic progress has let loose social forces making for dissatisfaction with and opposition to some of the worst and most undesirable features of the Stalin regime in the Party. Here it cannot be overemphasized that in a land of the proletarian dictatorship, where there is only one political party in legal existence, it is unavoidable that these new strivings, that this discontent among the masses should serve as sources of pressure on the Communist Party and that these should manifest themselves also inside and throughout the life of the Party itself.

The great mass of Soviet workers and farmers were more than ready to tighten their belts and put themselves on food rations in order to assure the success of the drive for the establishment of a socialist foundation of the Soviet economy. For the same reason, the great masses of the Party membership in the USSR were more than ready to make the most heavy sacrifices – even to put themselves on mental and spiritual rations – to swallow for a time even the most unpalatable factionalism, even the most disgusting crudities of the Stalin regime as a system of leadership in the CPSU and for the Comintern.

But at this point we must reckon with the dialectics of Soviet economic and social progress itself, of the very Soviet economic policy for which Stalin was so largely and creditably responsible. The very success of the two Five-Year Plans has aroused among the Soviet masses and the CPSU membership a greater desire for higher standards – political, cultural and spiritual as well as material. The adoption of the new Soviet constitution, with its provisions for a further enlargement of genuine Soviet democracy, was but a reflection of the successes of socialist economy, of the resultant new moods, new wants, new standards of freedom and new demands for self-expression among the masses.

The same Party members and functionaries, the same non-Party workers and farmers who were ready, even if not always enthusiastically, to accept the hard and narrow Party regime of Stalin and even bureaucracy in the Soviet regime – all in the interest of assuring the speediest realization of an adequate socialist base for the Soviet economy so as to guarantee the victorious defense of the USSR – are now, after the achievement of this goal, anxious to discard these restraints, eager to clear out of their way such ugly obstacles, yearning to make an end to such sacrifices which they no longer consider necessary.

Moreover, without distracting one bit from Stalin's dynamic leadership in the course of the application of his generally correct line of economic policy, it must be said that his regime has been characterised by utterly unnecessary and grossly impermissible features. These grew largely out of his method of applying factional strategy and hero-cult technique to economic policy. Corruption and unprincipled factionalism, incompetency, favoritism and callous bureaucratism began to permeate the entire Stalin system at an alarming tempo under these circumstances. These dangerous conditions were tolerated and even accepted by the Party masses and workers in general in the days of economic strain and hardship, in the early stages of the first Five-Year Plan. The crudest and costliest errors resulting from the narrow and rigid Party regime were often corrected only by the 'scapegoat' method, only by Stalin turning hard on the most enthusiastic, energetic executors of his policy on the ground of 'excesses'. The total incapacity of Stalin for Bolshevik self-criticism was

painfully revealed in the early days of the Five-Year Plan when he, with a sudden fury, launched a campaign against those 'dizzy with success'.

As the USSR emerged from the woods, economically speaking, there developed a marked demand for the dropping of restraints, for the easing of inner-Party relations, for a decrease of bureaucratism, for an end to corruption, for the abolition of all these evils – a continuation of which was no longer necessary or excusable in the eyes of even the most loyal followers. At first, Stalin encouraged these moves. For a short while, even the hero-cult was soft-pedalled. The birth-rate of busts declined, the size of pictures diminished, the multiplication of Stalin icons decreased. Soon the columns of the Soviet press were crowded with criticism of these evils, which but yesterday had been demanded and welcomed by the Stalin leadership itself as signs and evidence of healthy Party loyalty.

Here lies the reason for the Stalin regime returning to the Party members (without ever telling them that it had ever been taken from them) the right to directly elect unit-functionaries instead of them being appointed from above. Here is the explanation of the latest CPSU elections manifesting a trend in which an extremely high proportion of the incumbent Party functionaries were not returned to office.

Thus, for a while Stalin played with these moods, even encouraged them. It is becoming increasingly evident to me that Stalin did this at first in order to master and harness the new forces for the purpose of preserving his leadership and regime. For a while, he employed a certain modicum of honest, genuine cleansing, sacrificing factional lieutenants. He even made efforts to clip the bureaucrats.

However, these secondary concessions did not serve to allay the dissatisfaction which was becoming more rampant. The discontent in the country was more widespread. The dissatisfaction in the Party with the anti-critical, stifling atmosphere of the Stalin regime was more deep-going and could not be handled or overcome by the usual factional strategy of Stalin. This discontent with Stalin's system of Party leadership, and perhaps also with certain phases of his foreign and Comintern policy, seeped into, and began to grip, certain layers of the Party leadership itself – the uppermost strata of the Party and the Red Army not excluded. About the methods and maneuvers resorted to by the latter, we know very little. With long years in the factional schools of Trotsky and Stalin and without the watchful eye, skilled hand and brilliant mind of Lenin, some of these men may have harboured ideas or even resorted to impermissible measures in order to overthrow completely, instead of merely overhauling, the Stalin Party regime. I repeat: we must take no responsibility for, and refuse

to condone or condemn, the specific actions of these people, whose general political line had been identical with Stalin's, unless we are given an opportunity to get at the facts.

Stalin, discovering this extensive conspiracy and being what Lenin characterised him to be, apparently then turned with such brutal force, as only he is capable of displaying, on his concealed as well as open opponents. Instead of taking steps to create a freer and cleaner Party atmosphere, instead of making moves to end the atmosphere of paralysing fear, stultifying suspicion and devastating distrust, instead of resorting to more Party democracy, instead of seeking to secure a genuine Party discussion of the kind the Bolshevik party could afford under Lenin's leadership even at the very moment when Yudenich was menacing Leningrad, when Kolchak was threatening Moscow, when the Soviets faced the White-Guard and foreign-interventionist armies one more than twenty fronts, Stalin moved brutally and with terrific speed in the very opposite and suicidal direction. More than ever before, this time Stalin moved to extremes – with wild and overbearing force, with more untrammelled fury than intelligence and studied caution.

The cost of these errors made by both sides in the newest conflict rending the regime of the CPSU is terrific. It is incalculably heavy. For the moment, Soviet might in the realm of foreign policy is well-nigh impotent. For the moment, the cause of proletarian Spain is most seriously imperilled. Momentarily, the well-deserved glamour of the Old Bolsheviks has been further diminished and the prestige of the CPSU and of the USSR itself in the ranks of the international working class has suffered heavily. Just now, only capitalist reaction in general and Fascist reaction in particular are the gainers. We can easily perceive, under these circumstances, why particularly the warmest champions of the Soviet Union should stand aghast at the latest events.

Time and again, I have defended some of Stalin's policies against the onslaughts of the Trotskyites, against the 'blessings' of such bourgeois admirers of his as Duranty, and against the insipid and harmful defense of his program for the USSR made by his hand-picked party bureaucrats in this country and elsewhere. Despite all provocations, I have sought to be objective in my critical evaluation of Stalin and his contributions. It is on this score that I have often been called Stalin's attorney by Trotskyites and by disillusioned, despairing Communist Party members. It is with the same objectively critical attitude that I have sought to evaluate Stalin's latest moves. Exactly for this reason do I condemn the way in which he has handled the latest manifestations of discontent in the Soviet Union.

I do not do so for any factional reasons. Our organization at its very inception declared its complete independence of Soviet Party factions and personages.

It has been fundamental with us not to transfer mechanically Russian tactics, factions or factionalism to the other sections of the Communist International. Besides, the latest victims of Stalin's heavy hand were never tied up in the least with any associations I had in the years in which I occupied a leading position in the Comintern. They never participated in the life of the C.I. I am paying no debts when I express deepest concern and horror – as do millions of workers throughout all countries – at the Gamarnik, Tukhachevsky, Rudzutak, Yagoda and Unshlikht developments.

Despite it all, I see not only cause for concern but also some redeeming features in the whole difficult and disturbing situation. I have a growing conviction that the Stalin system of leadership has about run its course in the CPSU and, therefore, in the Comintern. I set no dates for improvement or vital change, but I think that the full logic of his ruinous regime is about to appear. I do not think there is much worse that the Stalin system can bring into the life of the CPSU and, therefore, into the life of the Comintern. I do not think there is a much lower point to which the Stalin regime can sink.

Lest anyone think I am whistling in the dark, let me say further that while I see a very grave crisis in the Party regime, I do not see at this writing a really insoluble crisis in the Soviet regime itself. Had even an infinitesimal fraction of the charges levelled against Tukhachevsky and his aides been true, then Germany and Japan could have, some time ago, dealt most fatal blows to the USSR. These blows would, of course, have been dealt with the lavish aid of democratic England and republican France. We have not forgotten how the liberal Lloyd George and his French democratic partners allied themselves with the Japanese invaders of Siberia and the Kaiser's picked troops in attacking Soviet Russia's Western frontier.

Again, I am confident that if imperialist intrigue should lead to an attack of the USSR, the Soviet masses would rally as one to an invincible defense and that there would be generated in the Soviet Union, as well as in the Party, a new, higher, and far healthier unity than has prevailed at any time since the death of Lenin. Why do I say this? Because I am aware of the fact that the economic base of the USSR is socialist, that it is becoming increasingly stronger and healthier despite mistakes, shortcomings and even sabotage – often undoubtedly perpetrated by agents of imperialist powers. That is why I see no really irreparable crisis in the Soviet system today despite the gravity of the crisis in the CPSU regime.

In short, the crisis in the CPSU, serious as it is, is not a crisis of decay or decline of the Soviet system as such; far more is it a crisis growing out of the tragic and costly inability of the Party leadership to meet the new situation in which the wants, standards and demands – material, political, moral and

cultural – of the Soviet masses have risen to new heights, have grown to new proportions. Before this developing maze of powerful social forces, forces revealing the imperishable vitality of the Soviet system, the Stalin regime – with all its impermissibility, with all its anti-Bolshevik brutality – is bound to give way.

Finally, despite the loss of prestige suffered by the CPSU though recent events, I am sure that in case there should be any attempt against the USSR by the Fascist and democratic imperialist powers, the workers' movement in the capitalist countries would respond effectively to the call for aid from the Soviet Union. If there had not been very great likelihood of such proletarian aid being rendered to the USSR by the international labor movement, then Germany, Japan, Italy and the 'great democracies' would not have feared or hesitated so long in transforming their hatred of Socialist Russia into a first-class 'war for civilization' against the Soviet Union.

In the meanwhile, we in the capitalist countries can and should do one thing above all else on behalf and defense of the USSR. This is: build ever stronger, ever more militant labor movements, rooted in the soil of their respective countries. Only the rise of such powerful labor movements and only the development of Communist forces which are not mere echoes of Russian faction struggles, but which develop their own initiative and self-reliance in the realm of theory and practice can today truly serve our Russian comrades in helping them overcome their tremendous difficulties and march on to better days.

18 June 1937

4. Jacobin Defense in the Spanish War¹⁶

Will Herberg

The Spanish situation, so contradictory in its many aspects, has given rise to a number of questions of an unusually complex character. How can you be for the Spanish anti-Fascist cause – we are sometimes asked by people more or less infected with Stalinist confusion – while carrying on a relentless political campaign against the Negrin government? But, more commonly, the questions comes from the other direction: how can you give any sort of assistance – as you do when you collect money and supplies – to a regime that imprisons and murders the best representatives of the Spanish working class? Both of these viewpoints are wrong but it is necessary to understand very clearly exactly why they are wrong and exactly what attitude revolutionary Marxism should adopt in the present situation.

The Political Character of the Spanish Civil War

Any consideration of the Spanish question must begin with an estimation of the political character of the war which is being waged in Spain. No one, of course, can fail to see that, on the loyalist side, the war is a just, defensive and progressive one. It is a war of the Spanish masses against a clique of fascist-militarist insurgents, aided directly by Hitler and Mussolini and, less directly, by the 'great democracies' of England and France. On the Fascist side, however, the war is thoroughly reactionary, an act of predatory aggression. Obviously, our sympathy and active support must go to the loyalist cause; for us, as for the Spanish people itself, the defeat of the Fascist insurrection is the great immediate objective.

But this is precisely the crux of the whole problem. *How* may the fascist insurrection best be defeated? What policies and tactics are likely to prove most effective? Hatred of fascism, determination, courage and devotion are

16 *Workers Age*, 15 September 1937, p. 2, and 22 September 1937, p. 4.

necessary but they are not enough; if victory is to be achieved, they must be directed along the proper channels, under the guidance of the proper political directives and slogans.

The present Negrin-Prieto regime, behind which the Stalinists are the chief political force, is following a policy which must inevitably weaken, undermine, and ultimately paralyze the struggle against Franco because it places all reliance upon the bourgeois elements in Spain and abroad, to please whom it is ready even to curb the worker-peasant movement, to alienate the great labor organizations and to combat all tendencies towards socialism. Whatever may be the intentions behind it, this sort of policy is bound to lead to defeat – it is bound to open the way for the establishment of a Fascist or military dictatorship in Spain. It is a policy of suicide and disaster.

What, then, shall be the line of the Spanish revolutionists, of the Marxists of the POUM, of the anarchists of the CNT-FAI, of the Left-socialists of the SP and UGT? Their line can only be: *Jacobin defense!* All energies into the struggle against Fascism, with the clear recognition that victory is possible only if the governmental regime and fundamental policy of republican Spain are changed in a revolutionary direction! A fight on two fronts: implacable war against Franco at the front – uncompromising political struggle against reactionary, self-defeating policies at home!

Girondin and Jacobin in the French Revolution

The policy of Jacobin defense is one to which the radical wing of many a progressive movement has resorted in the past with results that have made history. It is a policy that Marx formulated in theoretical terms on the basis of the experiences of the great French Revolution of 1789 and the revolutions of 1848; it is a policy that Lenin followed so brilliantly in the summer of 1917. What are the essential features of this policy?

In 1792, revolutionary France was at war with a vast reactionary coalition that was soon to embrace practically all of Europe. Dominating the French government were the Girondins, a conservative-republican party, sincerely opposed to monarchy and the old feudal-aristocratic regime but hardly less opposed to those radical measures and policies that alone could carry through the revolution at home and achieve victory at the front. First let us win the war – the Girondins repeated – and then we can turn our attention to the revolution. To this the Jacobins, the party of revolutionary intransigence, answered: If you do not push forward the revolution *now*, we will most certainly not be able to win the war! The Jacobins distinguished themselves in the military

struggle against the monarchist coalition, but they never, for a moment, ceased their political campaign against the Girondin regime, for they recognised in the policies of that regime a most serious obstacle to an effective war against the foreign enemy and its ally, the royalist conspirators at home. So successfully did they prosecute this political struggle that, towards the middle of 1793, they finally succeeded in replacing the Girondist regime by one of their own. The war against royalist reaction at home and abroad immediately took on a revolutionary character; the great masses of the French people were aroused to the most heroic achievement and victory was gaining on every front! 'If, at that critical time', Rosa Luxemburg tells us, 'France was able to meet each new coalition of the enemy with a new and miraculous... burst of fighting spirit... it was only because of the impetuous release of the inmost forces of society in the class struggle'.¹⁷

Were the Jacobins 'royalist agents' because they combined war to the death against the enemy at the front with implacable political hostility against the Girondin regime which, mind you, was officially conducting the war against the monarchist coalition – just as the Negrin-Stalinist regime in Spain today is conducting the war against Franco? Of course not – the Jacobins proved to be the saviours of France!

[An American Example]

Let us turn nearer to home. In the American Civil War, the North was fighting a progressive war, essentially a bourgeois-revolutionary struggle against the slave-holding South. But at the helm in Washington was a conservative administration, headed by Lincoln, which did its best to curb, conceal and reduce to a minimum the revolutionary character of the war. The whole struggle, Lincoln maintained, was not really over slavery at all but over the constitution – just as the Stalinists today maintain that the Spanish Civil War has nothing to do with socialism but is really a battle over the type of regime ('democracy' vs. 'Fascism'). The Lincoln conservatives refused to take any radical social measures, such as the emancipation of the Negroes, even though such measures were obviously necessary to win the war. The slavery question – administration spokesmen declared – could not possibly be considered before military victory had been achieved. In their letters, Marx and Engels repeatedly pointed out the suicidal character of the Lincoln policy and emphasised that, unless revolutionary measures were taken, the cause of the Union would be in a very

17 Luxemburg 1970, p. 303.

bad way indeed.¹⁸ In this Marx agreed with a group of Republican Radicals and Abolitionists who carried their hostility to the Lincoln administration to the point of open break. Fortunately, radical pressure proved effective; the policy of the administration underwent a marked change and the war was won.

Were Marx and Engels, were the Republican Radicals and Abolitionists, 'agents of the slave-power' because they combined unqualified support of the Union side in the Civil War with implacable political struggle against the Lincoln administration which, mind you, was officially conducting the war against the Confederacy? Of course not – they represented the best interests of the American people in the crusade against slavery!

Kerensky and the Bolsheviks in Russia

In August–September 1917, republican Russia was ruled by a 'people's front' regime, headed by Kerensky. In true people's front style, Kerensky had just outlawed the Bolshevik Party, suppressed its papers, arrested its leaders and driven Lenin into hiding with a price on his head. But now Kerensky was menaced from the right; a clique of monarchist generals, led by Kornilov, were making ready to oust him and take things over themselves. Early in September, Kornilov struck and the counterrevolutionary insurrection was launched. The parallel to the French situation is so striking that it surely needs no elaboration.

What was the policy of the Bolsheviks in this critical situation? Did they say: Kerensky is now being attacked by Kornilov, who is making a bid for power – therefore we must give up our opposition to the Kerensky regime and come out in its support? No – the policy of the Bolsheviks was quite different. Of course, we fight against Kornilov to the bitter end – said Lenin – but we do *not* support Kerensky. We continue our political opposition to him and point out that his policies opened the way for Kornilov in the first place and today make impossible any effective struggle against the Kornilovist adventure.

'We will fight, we are fighting against Kornilov', wrote Lenin in a letter to the Bolshevik Central Committee on 31 August 1917:

18 See Marx's letters to Engels, dated 7 August 1862 and 9 August 1862. Marx even suggested that it might have to come to 'revolution' in the North if the cause of the Union was to be saved. Just imagine – a revolution against Lincoln, right in the midst of the Civil War. Obviously, Marx was in the service of the then 'Fifth Column'.

but we do not support Kerensky. On the contrary, we expose his weakness. There is the difference. It is a rather subtle difference but it is highly essential and one must not forget it.

Was Lenin, were the Bolsheviks, 'monarchist agents' because they combined a vigorous struggle against Kornilov with implacable political hostility to the Kerensky government which, mind you, was officially conducting the war against the reactionary insurrection? Of course not – the Bolsheviks proved the salvation of the Russian people!

Is it really necessary to multiply examples? Did the most wholehearted support of the Ethiopian resistance to Italian imperialism preclude a revolutionary-democratic program in opposition to the feudal regime of the Emperor Haile Selassie? Or does resistance to Japanese imperialism in China today imply political support to the bloody, treacherous and, in the long run, defeatist regime of Chiang Kai-shek? No – in both cases, Jacobin defense is the only kind of defense that is really effective, the only kind of defense in consonance with the immediate and long-range interests of the masses of the people!

Revolution and War in Spain

The application of all this to the Spanish situation is plain on the face of it. Only a determined revolutionary policy can win the war against Franco. The policy of the Negrin-Prieto-Stalinist regime can lead only to defeat and disaster. The best interests of the Spanish people, therefore, demand a double struggle: the most determined prosecution of the war against Franco at the front and, at the same time, an unremitting political effort to bring about a change of regime and policy at home! Everything against Franco – but no political support of Negrin, no confidence in his regime!

To those, then, who protest that we give material and financial aid to the Negrin government whose reactionary character is so notorious, we reply: did not the Jacobins support the war against the monarchist coalition despite the fact that the Girondist regime was conducting it? Did not the Bolsheviks throw themselves into the struggle against Kornilov despite the fact that Kerensky was at the head of the government, the same Kerensky upon whose orders their party and press had been outlawed and their leaders arrested? Did not all of us do everything in our power to assist Ethiopia to beat back the legions of Mussolini, even though at its head stood Haile Selassie and his clique of feudal chieftains? The POUMists and other revolutionists in Spain are the very [best]

frontline fighters in the war against Franco; for us in this country, support of this war expresses itself in practical form primarily in material and financial aid to the anti-Fascist forces in Spain.

To those, on the other hand, who reproach the POUM for opposing the Negrin government in the face of the Fascist insurrection, we reply: the POUM is but following in the glorious footsteps of the Jacobins who opposed the Girondin regime in the face of the attack of monarchist Europe – of the Radicals and Abolitionists who opposed Lincoln in the face of the ‘slaveholders’ insurrection’ – of the Bolsheviks who opposed Kerensky in the face of the Kornilov revolt! ‘Class struggle and resistance to invasion’, we may learn from Rosa Luxemburg, ‘are not opposed to each other, as the official legend would have us believe, but the former is the means and expression of the latter. The fearless prosecution of the class struggle has always proven the most effective weapon against foreign invasion’. Precisely because victory in the war against Franco is the first and prime consideration, is it necessary never to falter in the political struggle against the reactionary and defeatist Negrin regime!

5. Stalinism Menaces the World Labor Movement¹⁹

Bertram D. Wolfe

I want to begin by thanking the Trotsky Defense Committee for inviting me to participate in this meeting. I regret that it is not being held under much broader auspices. I believe that all labor organizations have been derelict in their duty in not arranging the broadest mass protests against this infamous and murderous farce. So far we have had only a meeting under the auspices of the Trotskyists, and this one, with invitation to spokesmen of other organizations, but under the Trotsky Defense Committee. This is unfortunate, in my opinion, because it gives the impression that the issue is Trotsky versus Stalin, or that our protest is primarily for the defense of Leon Trotsky. Nor is it sufficiently offset by the fact that my own organization is holding a meeting of its own in this same hall next Wednesday night [16 March 1938]. I want to pledge my organization to work for the calling of a meeting adequate to the issues involved, under the joint auspices of every organization that is interested in the question. The Socialist Party has pledged itself to the same end, and leading figures in the Social-Democratic Federation and the Socialist Workers Party and anarchists have given similar assurances. To my mind, the issues are broader than the controversy between Trotsky and Stalin, broader than the defense of Leon Trotsky or of all the defendants now on trial, or the thousands and hundred of thousands crowding the jails of the Soviet Union, broader than the redemption of the good name of those who have already met death without trial at Stalin's hands, or at the hands of his henchmen, such as Yezhov.

The Russian purge and the methods it employs concern the very life of the labor movement in the Soviet Union and, by extension, in all the lands of the earth. Anyone who fails to raise his voice unequivocally on this question makes himself a guilty accomplice by silence. He who is indifferent we must brand for

19 Speech delivered 9 March 1938 in New York City under the auspices of the Trotsky-Defense Committee. Stenogram in the Bertram D. Wolfe Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Box 25, Folder 24. First published in *Workers Age*, 26 March 1938, pp. 1, 4–5.

his indifference; he who excuses this, accuses himself of being willing to introduce the same methods into our own labor movement; he who justifies it has bathed his hands, as did the conspirators in Shakespeare's play, in the blood of the innocent victims. And that blood is the best blood of our generation, the blood of the men who led the opposition to World War I, of the men who led in the making of the Russian Revolution, of the men who led in the building of the Communist International, of the men who risked their lives in the Tsarist underground, who exhausted themselves in the Civil War and famine, who performed miracles of socialist reconstruction, who led the Soviet Union in all of its achievements.

If one word of these charges is credited as true, then the Russian Revolution must have been made by traitors, bandits, imperialist spies, provocateurs, murderers and counterrevolutionaries. If Trotsky was a spy since 1921, then he was conspiring to overthrow himself while he was the leader of the Red Army. If Bukharin was guilty of conspiring to kill Lenin in 1918, then Lenin was a dupe and a moron to have praised him before his death as the 'darling of the Party', and the program of the Communist International is the program of a traitor. The rewriting of history has gone so far that Trotsky's heroic efforts to build up a Red Army, drive out foreign intervention and crush counterrevolution were all expended, and successfully mind you, at the orders of a Germany that was not yet Fascist, a Japan that was not yet through with its twenty-one points, an England that bribed these men to build up a mighty Soviet power so that they might later have more work and more fun trying to crush it.

These mad charges have at least gone so far that Lenin himself is on trial in Moscow. How else shall we interpret the charge that his closest associates were the agents of foreign governments? Is not the charge of German spy levied against the then Commissar of War but a revival of a charge levied in those days against the revolution, first of all against Lenin? Was it not Lenin who passed through Germany in a sealed train? Lenin who was most insistent of all on a separate peace with Germany? Lenin who insisted on the signing of the Brest-Litovsk peace while the accused Bukharin and the accused in absentia Trotsky were still hesitant?

This trial and this purge involve issues, it seems to me, that are even broader than the labor movement and the issue of honesty and democracy within it. Precisely because the working class is the most significant class in modern society, precisely because it is the main bearer of social progress, destined by its position in society and its own class needs to be in the vanguard of every forward-looking movement. Therefore we must recognise that if it is lacking in respect for human life and human integrity, then humanity itself is doomed to retrogression, rebarbarization, degeneracy and self-destruction. When

Robert Minor delivered himself of his famous declaration, 'Honesty is a bourgeois virtue', thereby he calumniated the labor movement, slandered the working class, gave the bourgeoisie – whose rule is based upon devices of hypocrisy – an honor they did not deserve, and by his attack upon the working class, he read himself and the party he speaks for out of its ranks, out of the ranks too of decent human beings of any class whatsoever.

Stalin's bloody deeds against the Communist Party, the Soviet state apparatus, the Red Army, the political police, the Party press, the Planning Commission, the leaders of industry and agriculture and the Soviet peoples, serve to complement the fearful crimes he committed against the Communist International and the labor movements in all other countries. Public trials have been mostly directed against those who were former oppositionists. But he uses the men whose names he has already blackened and continues to blacken, the Trotskys and Bukharins, chiefly to frame up those who but yesterday were his closest associates and the leaders of literally every branch of Soviet life: the entire General Staff, the Admiralty of the navy, the GPU – all the apparatus of internal and external defense; the premiers and presidents of every autonomous Soviet republic and region, excepting only three; the Party secretaries of every district but two; 90 percent of the editors of Party papers – all the apparatus of political leadership of the country; already more than a third of the Central Committee and two members of the Politburo have been included; two vice-commissars of foreign affairs and all ambassadors but two – virtually the entire apparatus of diplomacy; the authors of the five-year plans, heads of 10 departments of the Planning Commission and a score of state trusts – all the apparatus of leadership of industry and agriculture; even doctors, inventors, poets, dramatists, composers, sociologists – the apparatus of cultural life is wrecked by Stalin the arch-wrecker.

He has made infinitely harder the task of those of us who love the Soviet Union and would make the world understand its wonders of achievement, of those who would defend it against attack from the ruling class of all lands. He has murdered his comrades in arms, spewed such filth upon their names and on the fair name of the Russian Revolution that all of us feel unclean even to have to discuss this vileness. Today we can only help the Soviet Union if we succeed in making clear that Stalinism is the very opposite of what we are aiming at and defending. Only by exposing Stalinism, only by wiping out its foul influence can we redeem the honor of the Russian Revolution and of our class, whose greatest effort in history it so far represents.

Time will not permit me to attempt tonight to give a positive exposition of the causes of this frightful phenomenon, or the perspectives of overcoming it. Our organization is more convinced than ever that we were right in making, as

we did, a clean break with the growing system of corruption in the Communist International. In retrospect it is clear that we should have done it earlier. We are more convinced than ever that we were right in denouncing and breaking with the system that made a world Party a tail to a faction in the Russian Party. Even the best of the Russians after Lenin's death, men like Trotsky, Zinoviev and Bukharin, failed to understand that. Our organization is more convinced than ever that today the Soviet Union can go forward only if the Russian Communists and the Russian working class throw off the monstrous yoke of Stalinism, that the labor movement elsewhere can flourish only if it repudiates as vile and obscene the gangster methods and the traitorous policies of Stalinism.

If I am asked: 'Can Stalinism be overthrown?', I answer: 'How can Stalinism possibly continue in power? Has it not taken a path which leads from arrest to arrest, from forgery to forgery, from murder to murder? Is not the Soviet Union for the first time in a decade without a five-year plan? Is not Stalin forced by his policies to destroy his own tools? Has he not been obliged to purge a second layer which replaced the first, and a third replacing the second? Is he not destroying his very base for existence?'

Our task is to make clear what is happening, to redeem the Russian Revolution from its destroyer, to defend and spread what was positive and heroic and progressive, and still is so in the Russian Revolution, to clean out the seepage of filth that threatens to infect the movement and to deal with scrupulous cleanliness, clarity, decency, honesty and maximum working-class democracy, with the problems of our own working class.

6. Another Moscow Trial! A Statement²⁰

Again the world is being treated to the horrible spectacle of another Moscow trial. Among the victims this time are N. Bukharin, whom Lenin, in his last political testament, characterised as 'not only the most valuable and best theoretician of the Party but also legitimately to be considered the favorite of the Party'; A. Rykov, Lenin's successor as head of the Soviet state; C. Rakovsky, veteran leader of the revolutionary movement in a number of countries of Eastern Europe and one of Trotsky's closest collaborators; together with a whole group of Stalin's own loyal followers and devoted henchmen of yesterday, including Yagoda, Grinko, Krestinsky, Ivanov and others. The only reason Mikhail Tomskey is not to be found on this list is that he managed to escape his bloody persecution by committing suicide before they could get to him.

And the 'charges' against these men? A staggering mass of unreason, even more grotesque and nightmarish than at previous 'trials'! In addition to the old story of 'treason, espionage, wrecking, terror, provocation of military attack, and restoration of capitalism', there is the murder of three men, including Maxim Gorky, heretofore certified as having died natural deaths! Trotsky is accused of being 'linked as a spy to a certain foreign secret service as early as 1921!' Bukharin is prosecuted on the basis of a fantastic misrepresentation of the inner-Party struggles of twenty years ago! Both Trotsky and Bukharin are charged with responsibility for the attempt on Lenin's life in 1918! There are no words with which to characterise this obscene and bloody burlesque masquerading as a 'trial'!

If these 'charges' are to be taken seriously, they are an indictment of the revolution and of Lenin himself. For the prime movers of the former and the closest associates of the latter have been 'revealed' as 'spies, traitors and Fascist agents'! Was the whole Russian Revolution a fraud, made by such creatures as these are alleged to be? Was Lenin their 'accomplice' or was he a stupid dolt, easily imposed upon by his colleagues in the leadership, raising traitors

20 *Workers Age*, 12 March 1938, pp. 1–2.

and spies to the highest posts of the republic? Indeed, it would not be at all surprising to find Lenin himself included in the next list of 'traitors' as the source and fountainhead of all evil!

Without doubt, this 'trial' will proceed in the same old way. There will be abject 'confessions' consisting of a jumble of political and factual impossibilities concocted by the GPU, crude discrepancies and glaring self-contradictions. And there will be the same verdicts of 'guilty' decided upon in advance and the same series of executions to follow. Another great 'triumph' will be chalked up for the Stalin-Yezhov regime of blood and destruction!

But in the long run, such a 'triumph' will be a shattering blow to the very system it is designed to bolster up. Desperately set on perpetuating at all costs an oppressive regime long obsolete, long deprived of whatever progressive function it may once have had, confronted with a mass discontent so universal and so powerful that it comes to expression even among the topmost sections of his own officialdom, Stalin has rushed headlong into a mad crusade of extermination that knows neither logic nor limits. The Stalin clique has lost its bearings and its sense of reality. It shows no concern for world opinion, including working-class opinion; it shows no understanding of the inevitable consequences of its own course. It lashes out wildly, destroying everything in sight, without regard to the fact that, for every foe, actual or potential, it crushes, it raises half-a-dozen more against itself. Already Stalin is executing the second and third layers of his own replacements for victims of his earlier purges: Tukhachevsky's successor has just been shot, as have several of his judges; in the Young Communist League, the leadership has been cleaned out twice over; the fates of Mezhlauk, Grinko and others carry their own lesson. Stalin is rapidly creating a political vacuum around himself. Increasingly isolated from all the living forces of Soviet society, everything he does to preserve his despotic power helps only to undermine it in the long run!

Stalin's reactionary crusade of bureaucratic self-preservation is bringing havoc and devastation to the Soviet Union. It is disorganizing its economy, to some extent even undoing the tremendous achievements of former years. The country's forces of military defense are being weakened and demoralised. Social, intellectual and political life is being driven, numb and paralysed, into the foul shadow of the executioner. The socialist and labor movement abroad, the only sure support of the Soviet Union against world imperialism, is being alienated and repelled by the loathsome horrors of the successive purges and by the degradation of Bolshevik traditions and ideals that these have brought with them. In short, the Russian Revolution is the chief victim of the Stalinist crusade of extermination!

But the socialist foundations of the Russian Revolution are strong – stronger by far than Stalinism. The inexhaustible heroism and vast resources of the Russian working class that enabled it in the past to overthrow the rule of the landlords and capitalists, to beat back the armed intervention of world imperialism on twenty fronts, to overcome the legacy of backwardness and slavery left by centuries of Tsarism and to lay the foundations of a socialist society, this same heroism and class power will enable the Soviet working class to sweep out of its way the present great obstacle of its advance, the Stalin regime. Stalinism and all that it implies must be wiped out and be replaced by Soviet democracy if the Russian Revolution is to make any progress after its twentieth year. Again we say: the revolutionary resources of the Russian proletariat will prove equal to this new and heavy task placed upon it by history!

Already it is being hinted in the kept press and by the kept correspondents of Stalinism that the Bukharin-Rykov case is going to have an ‘American angle’. Nearly a year ago (24 March 24 1937) we were warned in the *Daily Worker* of the coming trials ‘of the godfathers of Lovestoneism, the Right opportunists, Bukharin and Rykov’. We are, of course, ready for the most preposterous frame-up and we are not very much disturbed at the prospect. The mad ravings of the Stalinist prosecutor will meet with the withering contempt they deserve from the thinking people in this country, from all sections of the labor movement that know us and our work. And it is the American labor movement that constitutes for us the final court of appeal.

Our group – as part of the International Communist Opposition – was born as an independent tendency precisely because we believed with the most intense conviction that no healthy revolutionary-socialist movement could be developed in this country as a reflection or an offshoot of one or another of the political factions in the Soviet Union. We regard it as fundamental that revolutionary socialism in America must grow out of our own labor movement, must have its roots deep in the soil of American reality and must strive to draw from that soil its inspiration and guiding principles. Only a movement of such independent political character can form a worthy part of a genuine international organization of the revolutionary proletariat.

We value Bukharin and Rykov, just as we do Rakovsky and Trotsky, for their abilities and their services to the cause of labor. We have learned from them all greatly in the past, however much we may have differed with them on certain important questions. But in no sense have we ever been, nor could we ever possibly have been, considering the fundamental nature of our tendency, the disciples or followers, much less the factional representatives, of one group or the other. Over eight years ago, in an official declaration, we stated: ‘Our

struggle has never been nor can it ever be an appendix to any individual or group in the CPSU, victorious or defeated'.²¹ The fundamental idea contained in this statement – that we have never been the American offshoot or branch of any political group or tendency in the Soviet Union and, in the nature of the case, can never be such – we have repeated in every official document dealing with the so-called 'Russian question' from that day to this. Indeed, we regard this utterly vicious and perverted relation of political dependence upon some Russian political faction as primarily responsible for the pseudo-'internationalism', really anti-internationalism, of the Stalinist movement outside of Russia and, to a large extent, of the Trotskyist movement as well.

As for ourselves, we do not hesitate to say that it is basically to our realistic and truly Marxian conception of the specific and 'exceptional' character of our problems and tasks in this country – as they are necessarily specific and 'exceptional' in every country of the world – that we owe the effectiveness of our efforts as an independent tendency in the general labor movement. It is to this attitude that we owe so much of our ideological independence and political strength, so much of our ability to formulate policy on the basis of actual conditions and the real relation of forces, without regard to extraneous factors and considerations. And it is to this line of independent revolutionary socialism, independent revolutionary Marxism, that we intend to adhere faithfully in the future!

21 *Revolutionary Age*, 15 December 1929.

7. War and Armament Economics²²

Lewis Corey

Let there be no mistake about the danger of war. In this, the twentieth year after the World War I, the world is moving toward another war – more destructive, more barbarous, more menacing to civilization.

And again, as in 1916, America is preparing to participate in that war.

There is the concerted nationwide campaign, organized by high-government officials, to create a war psychology among the American people. There is the earmarking by the War Department of ten thousand M-day plants for industrial mobilization and universal conscription. There is the billion-dollar appropriation from a navy capable of waging an offensive war. There is the subsidizing and building up of the merchant-marine to transport American troops to fight in foreign lands.

Twenty years ago, American troops were still fighting in foreign lands. No person of integrity now justifies that war.

It was called a war to end war. Yet today, there is danger of another and more destructive world war, with the nations now spending three times as much money on armaments as in 1913.

It was called a war to make the world safe for democracy. Yet today, democracy is in greater danger than it was twenty-five years ago, imperialist reaction is bloodier and more savage and the new reaction of Fascism threatens to engulf the world in barbarism.

Beware of False Pretences!

The ideals of World War I were false pretences. Let no false pretenses again ensnare us into war!

22 Radio-address delivered in a debate with Harry Ward on radio-station WEVD, New York, 16 June 1938. Published in *Workers Age*, 9 July 1938, pp. 3, 6.

It is important to recall the false pretences of World War I because they are reappearing in the policy of military alliances and war that is misnamed 'collective security'. The advocates of that policy ask us: but do you deny that security must be collective? We answer: of course, security must be collective! But war promotes collective insecurity. Your policy is actually one of military alliances, especially with Tory England, the greatest imperialist oppressor in the world today. Your policy moves towards war 'to make the world safe for democracy against Fascism', as in 1914–18 there was the false pretense of making the world 'safe for democracy against militarism'.

Moreover, let us consider the implications of that policy.

The policy of military alliances and war that is misnamed 'collective security' abandons the struggle against imperialism, the first cause of modern war. Thus, the most vocal advocates of 'collective security', while admitting that our own country is immune to invasion, demand the defense of American colonial possessions and American investments in China. The most reactionary imperialist interests are inflamed to promote military alliances and war.

The policy of military alliances and war that is misnamed 'collective security' means greater armaments and militarism. But greater armaments must necessarily lower the standards of living of our people, because armaments mean a lower production of useful goods and services. And greater militarism means greater reaction, the encouragement of totalitarian forces to suppress civil rights, and of authoritarian governments to control the independent organizations of workers and farmers – especially government control of labor unions. Greater armaments and militarism develop the preconditions of Fascism.

War Leads to Fascism

And those preconditions of Fascism may become Fascism itself in the event of war. For war today is completely totalitarian and must be waged by means of authoritarian enslavement of the people. The war 'to make the world safe for democracy against Fascism' might end in the destruction of democracy and the triumph of Fascism.

The struggle for peace means a struggle against war and the forces making for war. Hence the minimum six-point program of the Keep America Out of War Congress:

1. The immediate removal of American troops and marines from belligerent zones and the evacuation of American nationals who, if they stay, stay at their own risk; opposition to every expression of American imperialism.

2. No increase in the army and navy budget; work toward reduction of the present excessive military machine.

3. The democratic right of American citizens to vote on a declaration of war.

4. Abandonment of all existing plans for industrial mobilization and defeat of all new plans for universal conscription and regimentation, thus warning our militarists that the American people will not tolerate American participation in war abroad and war dictatorship at home.

5. No alliance or joint action with any nation or group of nations for war, or which is likely to lead to war, declared or undeclared, under any name or any pretext.

6. At home, concentration on the struggle against injustice, unemployment, bad housing, and poverty, and a determination by means of that struggle to seek out prosperity rather than to find it in war trade. Abroad, increasing solidarity with the people of all nations in the struggle to abolish economic injustice and colonial oppression, and to remove the causes of dictatorial militarism.

In accordance with that final expression of international solidarity, the Keep American Out of War Congress condemned the one-sided arms embargo on Loyalist Spain because this embargo favors the feudal military and Fascist hordes of General Franco. The Labor Commission of the Congress, representing one-third of the delegates, demanded immediate lifting of the embargo to Loyalist Spain.

War and Economic Injustice

The struggle against economic injustice and unemployment and for constructive economic action is crucial in the struggle for peace. Because today it is the economic crisis that drives toward war and Fascism. The Fascist nations, dominated by reactionary interests, are trying to 'solve' the crisis by means of rearmament, imperialism and war, and are thus making the crisis worse. They are providing work by means of a system of armament economics, which gears economic activity to the reactionary and destructive purposes of war, instead of concentrating upon a peaceful solution. Fascism inflames imperialism, while the older imperialism moves toward Fascism.

That system of armament economics is becoming dominant in the imperialist 'democratic' nations, England and France, and its beginnings are apparent in our own country.

The struggle for peace demands a struggle against the system of armament economics. We must use our economic resources and labor for peaceful

economic and social betterment. We must build houses, improve farm lands, create new highways, reinvigorate economic activity and employment for the purpose of making our country a finer place to live. We must mobilize the progressive forces of labor and the forces of all progressive groups to realize that program and the social-economic and governmental rearrangements that may be necessary.

Danger of Armaments Economics

And, along with that struggle for peaceful economic and social betterment, must go a struggle for peaceful world economic cooperation.

The American people must act to deny American munitions and American materials for munitions to all the arming nations. It is a scandal that American corporations are arming Japan, for example, while calling upon the American people to arm against the very Japanese menace they are helping to create.

The American people must make it clear to all nations that we are prepared to use our enormous economic resources in a program of peaceful world cooperation, on the condition, however, that those resources shall be used for the constructive purpose of peace and not for the destructive purposes of war. But that presupposes that the American people force the government to abandon militarist preparations and imperialist objectives.

The struggle against war is a crusade for peace and the works of peace. We must tread the road to peace clear-eyed and unafraid, uninfluenced by prejudices and false pretences, resolved to tie up inseparably the struggle against war with the struggle for economic justice and reconstruction.

8. Stalin Indicates Reich Alliance: Declares No Ground War with Nazis; CI ‘Turn’ Expected²³

A sharp turn in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, leading a parallel turn of the Communist International, was clearly foreshadowed last week in the address of Joseph Stalin at the eighteenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held at Moscow.

Rapprochement with Germany

The main burden of Stalin's report was a slashing attack upon England and France, whom he accused of encouraging ‘Fascist aggressors’, particularly Germany, with the object of ‘bribing’ them to launch a war against the Soviet Union rather than turn to the West. But Germany was now disappointing the Anglo-French diplomats, Stalin, maintained, for, in place of moving against the Soviet Union, it was now directing its offensive westwards, pressing for further ‘concessions’ from the ‘democratic’ powers. ‘As a matter of fact’, the Soviet dictator declared with obvious satisfaction:

the Germans have annoyed some of those who hoped for a Russo-German war to such an extent that they are beginning to unmask the real purposes of their policy. They flatly write in black and white that the Germans have bitterly disappointed them. Instead of moving farther East against the Soviet Union, they (the Germans) turn westward and demand colonies for themselves.

Stalin placed special stress on the point that a war between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia would be ‘without any real basis’ and that there was every reason for ‘friendly relations’ between these two powers. His speech, newspaper correspondents declared, was strikingly reminiscent of his well-known address in

23 *Workers Age*, 22 March 1939, pp. 1, 3.

1934 in which he plainly indicated the possibility of a Russo-German 'understanding'. At that time, this orientation did not lead to any concrete results, primarily because Hitler had other plans. For the last year, however, there have been persistent indications of the breakdown of the 'democratic front' policy that Russia has followed since 1935 and of a distinct shift towards a Soviet-Nazi rapprochement. Indeed, there have been reports from authoritative sources that actual negotiations have been under way for some time.

Everything Stalin said at the CPSU Congress last week strongly confirmed these reports. His emphasis on the lack of any real basis for a war with Germany, his sharp denunciation of the 'democratic' powers coupled with a remarkable lack of invective against either Germany or Italy, brought out in clear relief the present orientation of Soviet foreign policy.

Aside from its significance in showing the direction of Kremlin policy, Stalin's report was almost ludicrous in its crudeness and superficiality of conception. According to this 'best disciple of Marx and Lenin', this 'great father of the world's toiling masses', it is the 'aggressive' powers, the 'Fascist war makers', that are 'peaceful' in their attitude to the Soviet Union, while the 'democratic', the 'non-aggressive' powers are trying to provoke war against the Soviet Union! As Stalin went on 'explaining' the new orientation, it became abundantly clear how rotten has been the whole 'theoretical' structure erected by the Soviet leadership to justify its policies in recent years.

New 'Turn' in the CI

The day after Stalin spoke, D.Z. Manuilsky, reporting to the Russian congress on the world labor movement, drew the conclusions from the Leader's address for the Communist International, which for some years has been nothing more than an 'international' agency of the Soviet Foreign Office. A shift of Soviet diplomacy away from the 'democratic front' towards a rapprochement with Germany and the other Fascist powers is obviously bound to bring with it the utter collapse of the popular frontism that has completely dominated CI policy in recent years. Manuilsky's speech was the official proclamation that a sharp turn in the 'line' of the Stalinist parties all over the world was already on the way. Using the conventional Comintern jargon with which the Stalinists are familiar, he declared:

Application of the tactics of the united working class and anti-fascist People's Front has given rise to certain tendencies of a Right opportunist nature, to a tendency to abate the struggle against elements advocating

capitulation, the tendency to idealize the role of the so-called ‘democratic’ states and of glossing over their imperialist character. Appearance of such tendencies, even if in embryonic form, warns of the necessity of intensifying the struggle against opportunism. Communists of the capitalist countries are not sufficiently prepared for abrupt turns in events and have not yet mastered the forms of struggle dictated by the tense international situation.²⁴

Old Phrases Dusted Off

The significance of these words – especially of the reference to being ‘prepared for abrupt turns’ – is obvious enough. In line with the new ‘turn’, Manuilsky took from the shelf and dusted off some of the old radical phrases with which the CI used to operate before the era of popular frontism. These phrases sounded strange indeed coming from the mouth of a spokesman of Stalinism:

The working people want a united front of the working class of the capitalist countries with the Soviet working class. . . . This front will be a real guarantee of peace. . . . The working class of the capitalist countries, reduced to despair by crises, unemployment, poverty, Fascist terror and imperialist wars . . . want to live without Fascism, without capitalism. *They want socialism.* And it is for this reason that the capitalist world, in its last convulsions, is in a fury. It wants to save itself by Fascism. But Fascism will not save capitalism from destruction. . . . This [working-class] front will rouse the proletarians and working people in all corners of the globe, who are becoming aware that the time has come to settle accounts for their age-old sufferings.

Now the workers suddenly ‘want socialism’; only yesterday we were told by Browder and Stalin that the real issue was not socialism but ‘democracy’! It will be interesting and instructive to watch the Stalinist bureaucrats attempt to eat their own words and pretend that nothing is really happening after all.

24 *Daily Worker*, March 13.

What Now?

Exactly what form the new 'turn' of Stalinist policy will take is not yet clear but it is evident that some effort to revive the old revolutionary formulas will be part of the unprincipled concoction that will do service for a 'Party line' in the months to come. The 'turn' will probably reach the United States very late – for the time being, at least, the United States is still a 'good democracy' and exempt from the general denunciation. But reach this country it will, bringing with it serious consequences for the Stalinists in their relation to the labor movement and to those elements with which they have succeeded in establishing contact during the period of popular frontism.

9. Tomorrow's War²⁵

Jay Lovestone

The other day, Paris, the world's fashion center, opened a new sort of show. 'What to wear in war' was the exposition put on by the National Defense Ministry. General Gamelin offered the most favored model in a two-piece yellow (or green) oil-skin suit. Premier Daladier picked the popular accessories – a gas mask, mittens, rubber boots, portable fire extinguishers, flashlights, waterproof headdress, and cans of anti-gas powder.

So realistic was the show that even uniformed troops on holiday leave gaped at its starkness. Here were 15-millimeter anti-aircraft guns spitting twenty shots of hell a minute at a range of forty-two thousand six hundred and fifty feet, 8-millimeter machine-guns firing five hundred shots a minute at a range of almost a mile. Sirens, sandbags, artillery, dugouts, listening and lookout posts lent the proper setting to civilization's latest fashion show.

And not to be outdone or accused of insufficient loyalty to its ally, London turned one of its most important sections (Chelsea) into a laboratory for testing plans to cope with aircraft. More than five thousand took part in a mock air raid.

Things at the Melting Point

This is the Europe of today – in anticipation of and in preparation for the Europe of tomorrow, or perhaps even of tonight. No purveyor of demoralizing alarms, no orgy of talk, no storm of scares – single or combined – can present an exaggerated picture of Europe in torment, of the twilight of a continent. The present social-economic system is so sick, so weighted down by explosives, that even the smallest incident can start the biggest conflagration. Tomorrow's war will not require the killing of an archduke for its prelude. A simple, ordinary

25 *Workers Age*, 15 July 1939, p. 1; 22 July 1939, pp. 1, 3; July 29 1939, p. 4; 5 August 5 1939, p. 4; 12 August 1939, p. 4; 19 August 1939, p. 4.

butcher may be assassinated – and ... do not 'big' things sometimes depend on small 'accidents'? And does not Nazi demagogy thrive on precisely such incidents in the struggle of German imperialism for world domination?

In words, and in the battle of nerves, World War II has already been on for some time. The most effective underground agency in Hitler Germany today bears the magic letters BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation. The London *Times*, with a circulation of sixty thousand, when admitted, in the Third Reich wields a greater influence than any other non-Nazi paper. Even the inept and conservative British Labor Party has been advised and allowed by Chamberlain to call for mighty resistance to the war plans of the government – in Germany.

Europe has come to the conclusion that only by preparing for the worst might it hope for the best. All the broken hopes and battled aspirations of millions only symbolize a state of mind accepting war as inevitable. Nothing that the most fantastic imagination can conceive should be ruled out in such an atmosphere.

Cavemen of 1939

I shall never forget the Sunday morning in mid-April when President Roosevelt's billet-doux to Hitler and Mussolini was made public in Paris. The people were more than ever gripped by fear and, as it were, seized by hope; gas-masking children and sand-bagging homes took on a furious pace; and so did mortifying beautiful parks by digging them full of so-called air-raid shelters. How symbolic of present day capitalist civilization with its sky-scraping pinnacles of technical progress that humanity should be rushing back into caves for safety and escape from this very progress! But the cavemen of 1939 are far more helpless than the cavemen of old. The enemy of today is infinitely more savage and destructive ...

Bankruptcy or 'Appeasement'

Obviously, nations must nowadays be on guard against 'sympathy' being declared upon them. More and more it appears that 'peace' and 'sympathy' equals war. In this sense, millions have been reduced to awaiting hopelessly the outbreak of general 'sympathy' in Europe. This is so, whether Danzig will or will not be the signal for the major powers cutting each other's throats. Why? The economic basis of Britain's 'appeasement' policy is practically gone, though Chamberlain remains at the helm and continues to serve just as loyally

as ever the same British imperialist interests he served at Munich and before the double-crossing of the Czecho-Slovaks. The umbrella-bearing Neville is merely a symbol of the bankruptcy and the end of this policy of 'appeasement'. On behalf of German imperialism, Hjalmar Schacht made similar efforts at 'appeasement'. He also failed, but he has already gone out of the picture.

Then, of course, we must not lose sight of the fact that Great Britain went through similar stages and moves in 1914 – to avoid decisions and to maneuver for position. Twenty-five years ago British imperialist policy also had its Czech phase. It was planned diplomacy and not mere muddling that then led England to offer Austria the occupation of Serbia's capital, Belgrade, as a guarantee for adequate punishment of the assassins of the archduke.

However, economic forces have their consequences ineluctably written in the logic of events. And the logic of events is far more ruthless and inexorable than the keenest logic of men. The decisive factor of the present world situation can no longer be evaded or hurdled: German imperialism has become so powerful and is making so many encroachments in the world market that Great Britain can no longer make any substantial concessions to the Nazi empire – even in the interests of peace being prolonged or war being postponed. With the economic foundations of 'appeasement' strategy pretty nearly gone, the day of hellish reckoning cannot be far off.

Tomorrow's World War – When?

As I sailed for Europe on Good Friday [7 April 1939] and read the scare headline about Albania, I could not but think of one or two refinements of cynicism peculiar to this incident. The Pope's friend, Mussolini, deliberately picked that sacred day for the invasion and conquest. And what 'Christian spirit' was revealed by 'Il Duce' in the compulsion placed by his cohorts on the Albanian Queen with her three-day old baby! To top it all, it was Count Ciano himself who was the chief witness at the Queen's wedding a year ago.

Only twelve years ago, Italy concluded an alliance with Albania to 'protect' her against Yugoslavia. Just eighteen years ago, the Great Powers ('democratic' included) solemnly declared that if Albania should ever appeal to the League for protection and preservation, then her territorial integrity would be entrusted to Italy. And now, 'Il Duce', as the acclaimed guarantor of Albania, ensures its integrity by swallowing it whole for Italian imperialism. Little Albania discloses much of the ugly hypocrisy and cynicism inherent in all imperialist policy, 'democratic' as well as Fascist. Obviously, no one now pays any attention to the problem of violating tender consciences.

Danzig – The Last Rampart?

Many expect the war involving all major European powers to break out over Danzig. For instance, so competent an observer as the London *Economist* has stated: 'Danzig, the symbol of our last chance to stand on a land we have a chance of holding, is certainly worth the risk of a war with Germany'.²⁶ But there are many factors operating against such an eventuality. However, should the Nazis seek to grab the Polish corridor, the likelihood of the big explosion would be infinitely more serious. Such a move would arouse beyond measure the chauvinist ire of Polish imperialism. If unchallenged or successful, it would almost ensure the doom of Polish imperialist aspirations and perhaps even independence.

But why has British imperialism become so excited over the safety of Poland, Romania and Greece? Why the sudden solicitude? Certainly it is not because England loves these peoples or admires their cultures. Even the very heavy British investments in Poland and the importance of Greece to the Empire's lifeline do not in themselves explain Britain's present determination. There is much more involved here. Should Nazi imperialism succeed in gobbling up these 'guaranteed' countries, it would be provided with such an abundance of raw materials that it would no longer have to fear the stifling efficiency of a British naval blockade. To rob England of this prime weapon or even to undermine its deadliness would spell a staggering loss of prestige and incalculable disaster to Great Britain.

Within the Second World War

In fact, the second world war has been going on for some time. What we have had in the devouring of Czecho-Slovakia, in the bloody invasion of Spain and in the two years of fighting in China has been a major war in every horrible respect. But no one can fix the day when this war will spread to involve the biggest 'civilised' powers in Europe. It would be suicidal, on this account, to lull oneself into senseless security. Formalities or their lack cannot extinguish the embers of conflict – nor prevent their bursting into flames and bringing affairs to the melting-point. In comparison with the complexities of today, the problems of the last world war appear to be of pastoral simplicity. Nowadays we are living in a period when war comes to nations even more often than nations go to war.

26 *The Economist*, 13 May 1939.

More than that, lots of war moves that once came after a formal declaration now occur long before war is officially proclaimed. Today we witness the withdrawal of ambassadors by nations at peace with each other; the reorganization of governments in preparation for war; the cancellation of relations in the field of sports as part of psychological preparation. And what unrelenting campaigns in the war of nerves! Twenty-five years ago, conscription came because Britain was at war. Now England's manpower is conscripted because the country is no longer at peace. No wonder Earl De La Warr [Herbrand Sackville], Minister of Education, could advise a group of French professors on an Easter visit to England to 'prepare for the next peace'.

When Peace Vanishes

Only deliberate indifference to reality can keep us from seeing the war purposes of the increasingly insidious control of the press throughout the world. Of course, the control of news means the control of the views. In every land we see a systematic wiping out of the rights and standards of the working people as an integral part of feverish, gigantic war preparations.

In the present war crisis, treaties mean even less than a quarter of a century ago when their value hovered around zero. Lest anyone forget: at that time Romania and Italy were bound by treaty to Germany but fought alongside the Allies against Kaiser imperialism. How foolish it would be for anyone to put any stock in these pacts, treaties, alliances and guarantees of today! No one can repeat too often the great truth that nothing genuine, least of all genuine peace, can be forged in the chancellories of the world. With all that, inestimable import must be attached to Roosevelt's letter to Hitler and Mussolini as definite notice of early American participation on the side of the Anglo-French bloc. Here is unmistakable notice, not after three years of bitter warfare but well in advance of the formal outbreak of hostilities.

And the 'poor little countries'! They are worse off than ever – unsafe, undermined and at the mercy of the bigger powers. The invasion of Belgium was preceded by a war declaration. But Albania was swallowed; Czecho-Slovakia was devoured bit by bit; Lithuania was mangled; China was drenched in blood; Ethiopia was wiped off the map and Spain was invaded and occupied without even a pretence at an official declaration of hostilities.

Then, in the totalitarian war of today there are no non-combatants. Older men, younger women, children and infants all are totally unsafe much before the outbreak of war. This is the real meaning of the intensive air-raid protection and evacuation schemes being speedily worked out in England and France.

Furthermore, in the last war the front-fighters had at least the assurance that those near and dear to them were comparatively safe at home, or began to worry about them only after a long stay in the trenches. In tomorrow's war the men on the firing line will have no such assurance. Their morale will thus be sapped and endangered much earlier. Here is a situation loaded with new and explosive problems for the war staffs of the world.

Germany – Key to Chaos of Tomorrow's World War

Why the war? Only the purblind can see ideologies or ideals as the cause. Last mid-April, Roosevelt put his finger on the sorest spot when he emphasised the difficulties in the world market. That is where the crisis is rooted. Hitler was for once telling the truth when he said: 'Germany must export or die'. The key to the whole war crisis is to be found in German capitalism and its pivotal role in the international economy. Hence an evaluation of the German capitalist economy today is the first prerequisite to an understanding of the aggravated world crisis.

With the help of American capital, the German economy gained great industrial strength in the teeming twenties. By 1928 the German bourgeoisie controlled a mighty productive machine geared to pouring out vast quantities of commodities into the world market. But soon came 1929 with its world crisis – the profound and world-shaking consequences of which none can overestimate. And German industry? Precisely because of its very high technical development and productive capacities, German capitalism was among the several hit and most rudely shaken by the crisis. Grave social repercussions were the inevitable consequence. Internal crisis followed upon internal crisis. Fascism was the political culmination – a ruthless political receivership over a society in economic bankruptcy.

A Terrible Miscalculation

All the whys and wherefores of the smashing victory scored by Fascism in Germany, I am not examining at this point. No doubt the post-war Social-Democratic Party contributed heavily towards the disaster. With equal emphasis, I must stress that the attempt to have Germany copy or set up a proletarian dictatorship on the Russian pattern caused a deep and fatal cleavage in the German working class. Without this breach in the ranks of the German proletariat, Hitler's Nazis could never have broken through and marched to power.

However, the point I am underscoring now is that the world's great 'democracies' really rejoiced at Hitler's ascendancy because they saw in it a solution of Germany's grave labor problems and social questions. The powers-that-be in these 'democracies' thought, felt and hoped that through Fascism Germany's bourgeoisie could alleviate, if not actually overcome, the social crisis and thus not become tormented competitors in the world market.

The best minds of the 'democracies' miscalculated fatally. Equipped with a splendid industrial machine, freed through Fascism from the immediate problems of working-class resistance to deadening speed-up, low wages, long hours and deteriorated social services, Nazi imperialism became a more serious menace and powerful competitor in the world market than Kaiser imperialism ever dreamt of being. Here is one of history's most decisive miscalculations. Today, German capitalism is a far more dreaded rival in the world market than any other ever faced by the British or American master-classes. And this in a world market originally disrupted and steeped in chaos as a result of a devastating war and world crisis!

German Economy Today

Germany's industrial might is now gigantic. The greater Reich has a home market catering to a population of about ninety million. Except for the Americans, the German bourgeoisie now exploit the largest contiguous economic area and possess the finest technical machine in the entire capitalist world. But there is no such thing as a special Nazi economy. Fascism is a new type of state to maintain essentially old class relations. Fascism represents a significant change of state-form to maintain the basically old class system. Fascism, or its specific German expression, Nazism, is not a social system like feudalism, capitalism or socialism. Countless false and costly conclusions flow from the failure to understand this vital reality. Under Nazi leadership, the German bourgeoisie are still the dominant economic class and more and more turn to the development of state-capitalism to hitherto unheard of levels. Without denying in the least the Nazi import of this development, I must heavily underscore that state-capitalism is only a variant capitalist economy. Of course, not all state-capitalisms are alike. For that matter, not all 'free-individual' capitalisms are alike.

At this moment, German capitalism, ruthlessly maintained by the Nazi state, is booming. Fantastic and feverish armament production has undoubtedly shot the general economic trend skyward. Today, the German economy is experiencing a big boom – largely, primarily, but not solely, an armament- or

cannon-boom. German industry and agriculture are short of labor. There is a dearth of basic raw materials and a marked lack of tool- and machine-making machinery. We are witnessing under the lash of the savage Nazi taskmasters the expansion of old and the creation of new industries. The capacity to produce substitutes or synthetic products is growing more rapidly in Germany than we realize or want to believe. Here are all the classic characteristics and unmistakable earmarks – and fatal flaws and dangers as well – of wild booms in the capitalist economy.

But for a number of reasons which I am not going into at this time, these flaws and dangers spell more ghastly consequences for German capitalism regimented by the Nazis than for other lands. Of this Hitler and the giant German industrial and financial overlords are by now fully aware. Hence, they are desperately seeking to avoid inflation and the diseases of the devastating 'run-away boom' by rigidly controlling wages and farm prices (downward), through complete foreign-exchange control and through countless stringent currency regulations. At most, these remedies and preventatives are of only temporary aid. In a fundamental sense, these very quack cures are only aggravating and not overcoming the inherent ineradicable contradictions of capitalism.

Some Significant Figures

A few figures to illustrate the above estimate. Greater Germany's share in the world's total industrial production is now 15 percent in comparison with 8.3 percent in 1932. The terrific role of armament production to which the entire economy is geared is revealed by the fact that while total working income rose by 64.2 percent between 1933 and 1938, the production of consumption goods increased by only 29.5 percent. The authoritative *Reichskreditgesellschaft* of Berlin, in its latest quarterly report, tells the world that the index of 'production goods' industries (largely armament) leaped from 45.7 in 1932 to 145.3 in April 1939, while the index of 'consumption goods' industries rose in this period only from 74 to 112.8. And let no one make any mistake. A good deal of the consumption goods turned out are not for immediate use but are stored for later consumption by vast armies in military combat.

The entire 'boom' is decisively state-financed and not an expression of upward private capitalist enterprise and development. Only two of the twelve billion marks spent last year in building construction went into housing. The rest was devoured mainly by monstrous military expansion and needs. From March 1933 to March 1939, the Reich's debts have nearly tripled and the

currency circulation has almost doubled. Then there are in circulation armament certificates amounting to many millions of marks which have not been included in the official total of Reich debts.

Last year saw a shortage of seven hundred thousand to eight hundred thousand laborers in agriculture alone – despite the importation of about two hundred thousand land workers, mainly Poles. The Nazis, who promised to take women out of the industrial plants and put them into the home kitchens, are confronted by such a serious dearth of laborers that they have been compelled to ‘import’ labor from annexed lands and to force into the factories more than six hundred thousand women who never before worked for wages. Furthermore, the Nazis, who were supposed to be the great saviours of the German middle class have been responsible for a cruel and calculated speed-up of proletarianization in the Reich. Last year the Hitler regime, facing a shortage of a million workers, forced one hundred thousand artisans to give up their economic independence and to slave as laborers in arms and munition plants.

Weakness of German Economy is Decisive Question

It is impossible to exaggerate the heavy price paid by the workers through the devitalizing speed-up alone – a speed-up inseparable from the Nazi-imperialist intensification of efforts to build up gigantic war equipment and a huge reserve of essential commodities. As a result, ill-health and disability caused a loss of seven hundred and forty thousand man-years of work in 1938...

[T]he time is drawing near when the German capitalists that have made this heavy investment in armaments will demand dividends. Then what? This leads to the all-decisive question of present-day international capitalism. What is going to happen to the German economy? For the capitalist system in the Reich, as coordinated by the Nazi dictatorship, there are only the following alternatives:

1. Expand or at least maintain the present boom by expanding Germany's share of the world market. This is extremely difficult and can only incur determined resistance from American, British and French competitors, at whose expense such German expansion must come. Actually, in 1938 the proportion of German industrial production exported dropped to 10.9 percent. Even the Nazi chieftains most devoted to ‘autarky’ or national economic isolationism and self-sufficiency, realize that the German capitalist economy must attain an export-quota of 20 percent – or be compelled to depress German living

standards still further. The Nazis do not seem to be anxious to face the consequences of such an eventuality. This explains Hitler's 'Export or Die' campaign, which has already brought, in the first quarter of 1939, a 40 percent increase in shipments to the countries along the road of the eastern and south-eastern drive by Nazi imperialism.

Nor will Roosevelt's hint of another international conference be of any serious use here. Such a conference did take place in 1933 in London's hall of fossils, under far more favorable circumstances. No talk-fest or little concessions that do not alter the positions of the leading imperialist powers in the world economy can fit German capitalism into the world market.

2. Should Nazi imperialism fail to extend or maintain the boom, then disaster is ahead for the Hitler dictatorship. If the present boom breaks, it will bring... all sorts of grave consequences. To ward this off, the German ruling class will be ready to resort to any and every desperate move – not excluding war.

3. And the third alternative of war is not necessarily a way out for the German capitalist economy – with all recognition of the might of Hitler's military machine and Nazi economic preparedness for the conflict. Nowadays, even victories entail suicidal cost. Where are the victories of Versailles today?

4. An economic collapse in Germany bears the germs of proletarian revolution – despite the present pitiful weakness of the subjective forces of social revolution in the Greater Reich...

Even from a long-range viewpoint, there are no other alternatives in sight for German capitalism in the international imperialist arena. None of these four alternatives can ensure fitting German capitalism into the world market of today. None of these alternatives means peace or stability for humanity. Here is the ghastly logic of capitalist development on a world scale. Here we have the why and wherefore of the developing world war. Here is the completely imperialist character of the spreading world war – more sordid to the core than any other imperialist conflict in history.

All talk about its being a conflict of ideologies is plain poppycock. Of course, ideological elements enter into all significant historical events and actions, but they are of no decisive import. The savage Nazi persecution of the Jewish people, the barbarism of the Hitler government against the working people, the British double-crossing of the Zionists in Palestine, the sacredness of the ideal of self-determination for the smaller countries or weaker peoples, the Nazi nonsense about 'Aryanism' and the brutal wiping out of democratic rights in Germany – all of these are very important in themselves, as such. But, and the but looms decisively on the international horizon, none of these offers the why of the world war.

The impending holocaust is nothing more and nothing less than a fight among the giant imperialist robber-powers for the redivision of the earth's resources. For this reason and this reason only will many millions of workers be called upon or forced in all lands to slaughter each other . . .

Some Vanishing Differences

But too many people throw sand into their own eyes and see the imperialist war as a clash of ideologies and ideals. Altogether too many see differences of this sort between the warring camps – differences vital and permanent enough to warrant international labor support of the Anglo-French imperialist bloc against the Fascist imperialist axis.

Of course there are differences between the Fascist capitalist powers and the 'democratic' capitalist countries. Too often these differences are exaggerated. Yet some of them are important. However, differences in political organization at home – in peacetime – must not be viewed statically. Particularly in the present period of rapid change must we view all social and political institutions dynamically. The significant and decisive feature of the present international situation is not that there are some differences between the opposing imperialist groups; rather it is that significant as these differences may be in peacetime, they tend to disappear as rapidly as war preparations advance and vanish entirely with the outbreak of actual and active warfare. This was largely true even in the last world war.

It is clear to everybody that the impending world conflict will be totalitarian from beginning to end – and likely for long after the finish. Totalitarian wars bring totalitarian defense and attack. This entails political reorganization along totalitarian lines; in other words, the eradication of all democratic institutions as the primary and vital prerequisite at home. Anticipating this totalitarian war, the German bourgeoisie has resorted to a rigorous Fascist regime some years in advance. The so-called 'democratic' opponents of Nazi imperialism cannot escape this course in their armed defense of their positions and resources. More and more is military preparedness synonymous with the extension of Fascist or totalitarian methods of political life in countries like England, France and the United States. War spells the establishment of full Fascist regimes in these countries. Obviously each land will have its own specific form of fascism . . .

Unchallengeable and Persistent Identities

But if the peacetime differences between the ‘democratic’ and Fascist imperialist powers vanish with war, the identical features of the two robber bands present unbroken continuity throughout peace and war. The great French and British ‘democracies’ do not treat the vast majority of their populations – the colonial peoples – any differently from the way the Japanese and Italian Fascist imperialists do in peacetime. I recall what Fenner Brockway told us at the last conference of the International Workers Front Against War. When Ramsay MacDonald became Prime Minister, Wedgewood Benn took over the Ministry of Colonial Affairs and asked Brockway for suggestions on how to handle the problems of the office. The latter strongly urged the immediate release of more than thirty thousand prisoners in India. Forthwith, Mr. Benn cabled this recommendation to the Viceroy of India, who submitted it to the eleven provincial governors. Ten of them replied that they would rather resign than liberate the Hindus imprisoned for struggling against British imperialist oppression. The Labor Party was on the spot and dared not risk a general election on this issue.

Since the last war made the world ‘safe for democracy’, the natives of Cape Colony have been subjected to segregation and disfranchisement. In Kenya, British ‘democracy’ has robbed the natives of the best land. Indelibly and painfully inscribed in my memory are the following remarks of a French-African delegate at this international conference:

Black man in French Empire runs from white man whom he fears to death. We live in misery and die and have given up hope for whites. They treat us worse than animals.

This is the light and power of capitalist “democratic” civilization in the more distant lands! That is how Africa came to be known as “backward.” Now, anyone should be able to see who made Africa “the dark continent”!

Preparations for War Bring Growing Dictatorship

If the impending war were really one of democracy against Fascism, then the ‘democratic’ powers have already lost it – through the very preparations for victory. These war preparations, as we have seen, have been wiping out every vestige of democratic rights even in the metropolis – the homeland. These preparations have been aggravating the maltreatment and imperialist enslavement of the colonial millions.

Furthermore, it is very far from true that all the countries in the 'Grand Peace Alliance' have democratic regimes. This is not so, even in the wildest stretch of the imagination, even in the most limited sense. Poland, Greece and Romania are not sparkling gems of democracy. Smigly-Rydz, Metaxas and King Carol are no better democrats than Franco, Hitler, Hirohito and Mussolini. They are smaller dictators only because they terrorise smaller countries and not because they are less terrible Fascist tyrants. These pettier gents of the 'democratic' fold are only little partners in the same big plunder.

Two of a Kind

Let none forget the bestial role played by Polish imperialism in the ravaging of Czecho-Slovakia. It was the same Polish imperialism that thwarted the conclusion of Barthou's Eastern pact and thus facilitated Hitler breaking his isolation. None other than Colonel Beck signed a pact with Hitler when he needed help most. These tiny 'democrats' thus made it easier for Hitler to make the first breach in the West, to militarise the Rhineland, grab Austria, gobble up the Sudeten and wipe out Czecho-Slovakia.

In imperialist sordidness it is impossible to choose between the opposing camps in the second world war. At best, Great Britain's moral indignation against Italy's seizure of Ethiopia is muddy. England's own record in this sphere could not stand moral scrutiny. Back in 1915, Great Britain promised to deliver to Italian imperialism – as a bribe – Ethiopia's port and railroad of Djibouti. In 1925 Britain offered Mussolini, whose hold on Italy was then none too firm, the greater part of Ethiopia in return for England's annexation of the Lake Tsana section in what was once the domain of the Lion of Judea. Who can forget the Hoare-Laval offer to Mussolini at the darkest moment of his bloody adventure in Ethiopia? Not being able to come to agreement with the French and British imperialist brigands in this part of the world, Italy became merely Germany's challenge in the Mediterranean.

Sinister Interests and a Sordid Mess

It is hardly necessary, at this date, to debunk the theory of 'good and bad', or the 'less bad and worse' in regard to the imperialist line-ups – satiated and unsatiated, aggressor and defender. All of this has nothing to do with democracy, justice, idealism or ideology. Here are involved only questions of military strategy and economic necessity in the conflict for position and prey amongst the imperialist powers. In a fundamental sense, even American imperialism

is unsatiated and the hungriest power of them all. In proportion to its industrial capacities and resources, Wall Street imperialism certainly does not have a commensurate share of the world market.

Should German imperialism devour the Balkan lands it would be no more satiated, no less unsatiated. Hitler would then be still hungrier for loot and in a better position to attack other countries. And all the 'democratic' powers, today satiated and on the defensive, would, if defeated, tomorrow become unsatiated and set to work on preparing a war of vengeance, a war in which they would be the aggressors, for recovering lost colonies, markets and spheres of influence. The foreign policies of the 'democratic' and Fascist imperialist powers have an identical, a common mainspring. All of their policies are actuated by the same sinister and sordid motive – the profit motive underlying all imperialist interests.

This alone explains why it is that, while preparing for war against the Fascist competitors, the biggest and wealthiest 'democratic' powers continue to arm Hitler, Mussolini, Franco and Nippon's Hirohito to the teeth. Thus, between 40 and 75 percent of Germany's basic imports vital to the Nazis' enormous war machine come from the so-called 'encircling' ('democratic') powers. Last year, Germany imported more raw materials than in 1913. Hitler imperialism has been concentrating on importing metals and ores...

In fact, 'the greatest democracy of them all', the United States, has been called the war warehouse of the world. Materials especially useful for war purposes registered an export-value of two billion, four hundred and eighty-one million dollars in the last three years. This marks a gain of 90 percent in comparison with the export-value of one billion, two hundred and ninety-nine million dollars for such materials in the preceding three years. The significance of this increase assumes new proportions when one realizes that the total value of all American exports in these comparative periods rose by only forty percent – less than half as much. Here we have the basic reason for America's 1938 'favorable balance of trade' being greater than that of any year since 1921. The role of American 'democracy' as the world's biggest merchant of death accounts, in no small measure, for the US gold hoard of over sixteen billion dollars.

The Strategy of Disaster

What more tragic folly could one embrace than do those who take seriously the talk about the impending world conflagration being a war for 'democracy and against Fascism'. Somewhere Hegel said that tragedy is the conflict

between right and right. But deeper and darker is the tragedy when it is a conflict between wrong and wrong – at the expense of millions of human beings. Sordid motives and sinister interests dominate both imperialist camps. There is nothing right and there is everything wrong about the war now being prepared. The imperialist monsters about to lock horns are doing nothing else but preparing the world's worst tragedy. The blackest crime against humanity is now being mapped by the combined general staffs of the armies of the Fascist and 'democratic' imperialist governments.

10. Stalin-Hitler Pact – What Does it Mean? Statement of the Independent Labor League of America²⁷

Well, it is out in the open at last! The Soviet-German rapprochement, which we repeatedly forecast during the last year, is now an official fact, in the form of a so-called 'non-aggression' pact, following hard upon the heels of an all embracing commercial agreement.

The Soviet-German rapprochement will, of course, have far-reaching consequences in terms of international politics, although it is by no means the bombshell the newspapers pretend it is. For months, it was understood in the great capitals of the world that 'discussions' were under way between Russia and Germany, and all the foreign offices had their plans laid out in advance for just such an eventuality. Particularly ludicrous is the virtuous horror and indignation expressed in Downing Street at 'Russian duplicity'. We have not yet forgotten Munich; nor are we ignorant of the fact that in the past few weeks Chamberlain's confidential agents have been assiduously at work in Berlin and elsewhere trying again to woo Hitler to a 'European front', excluding Russia.

We are not among those who judge diplomatic alignments by internal regimes or so-called 'ideological' tendencies. As far as we are concerned, a Soviet alliance with imperialist Germany is, in itself, neither better nor worse than a Soviet alliance with imperialist Britain, imperialist France or imperialist America, even though the first is a 'Fascist' power and the others are 'democratic' powers. It all depends on circumstances. But as things are shaping up today, there can be little doubt that Soviet Russia, under Stalin's fatal leadership, has lost all freedom of action in international affairs. Whichever way it now turns, the USSR is virtually forced into the role of an auxiliary of one or the other imperialist bloc, in effect serving the ends of predatory imperialism in either case. Only a little while ago, Stalin was ready to play the game of Anglo-French imperialism in the so-called 'Stop Hitler' front; now he is busy 'appeasing' Hitler at the most critical moment. Thus he swings from one extreme to

27 *Workers Age*, 2 September 1939, pp. 1, 4. Reprinted as a four-page leaflet.

the other without being able to follow a consistent, independent course to advance the interests of the Soviet Union against imperialism, Fascist and 'democratic' alike. He is unable to follow such an independent course because he long ago abandoned the only possible point of support of a sound Soviet foreign policy, the international labor movement. Soviet Russia is now paying the heavy price of more than a decade of Stalinist diplomacy.

Perhaps the chief significance of the far-reaching shift in the Soviet course lies in its probable repercussions in the international labor movement. For the past several years, following the twisted logic of the Soviet attempt to 'woo the democracies', the Stalinists have been preaching the gospel of popular frontism and 'collective security', based on the alleged 'peace-loving' character of the 'democratic' imperialisms in contrast to the warlike aggressiveness of the Fascist powers. Under orders from the ruling clique in the Kremlin, they have been ready and eager to sacrifice the most vital interests of the masses, to play the game of capitalist reaction, to whoop it up for militarism and armaments in true jingo fashion. This is the meaning of the current Stalinist 'Party line' – abject subservience to the 'democratic' imperialists at home and abroad, even at the cost of spreading demoralization, confusion and paralysis in the ranks of labor.

And now Stalin is engaged in making a right-about-face in his foreign policy, in the name of which all of these atrocities have been justified. What is going to happen to the doctrine of the 'concerted front of the democratic powers against Fascist aggression' now that the Soviet Union has made its alliance with Nazi Germany? What is going to happen to the theory of the popular front once the 'democratic' elements at home, just as the 'democratic' powers abroad, are no longer looked upon as allies of Soviet Russia? Inevitably, the whole miserable system of popular frontism – already bankrupt and discredited in its practical results – will collapse like a rotten, worm-eaten structure, leaving a nauseating stench behind it.

And what about 'collective security'? Only yesterday the Stalinists were vociferously calling upon this country to join the 'democratic front against Fascist aggression' along with England, France, the Soviet Union and other 'great democracies'. For the sake of this 'democratic front' we were asked to risk involvement in war and to invite all the disasters that war would inevitably bring in its train. And now the Soviet Union suddenly walks out of this 'democratic front' and concludes a pact with the very chief 'Fascist aggressor' – to the obedient applause of the Stalinist press! Is it not plain that the whole 'collective security' propaganda of the Communist Party has never been anything but a brazen fraud, a gross swindle and deception practiced upon the American people in order to server Stalin's diplomatic aims of the moment?

If recent events mean anything at all, they should strengthen our determination to avoid any entanglement in the imperialist power politics of Europe, no matter how glittering the phrases with which the trap is baited. Keep America out of war!

What will follow? What unprincipled concoction of treacherous phrases and demagogic slogans will make up the new Stalinist 'Party line' as the instrument of the new Soviet foreign policy? One thing is clear at any rate: Once the new 'Party line' is decreed in Moscow, it will be taken up by the 'coordinated' cliques of Stalinist henchmen in the various countries and injected by them into the labor movement with the same unscrupulousness and the same disregard of consequences that marked the ultra-leftist dual unionism of 1929–35 and the popular frontism of recent years.

American labor must be on the watch against the new maneuvers and intrigues that are sure to come with the new 'Party line', when that is decreed from Moscow. It must protect itself against disruption and demoralization engineered by elements utterly alien to its needs and interests. It must act now if it is to forestall the great damage that is bound to come when the Stalinists begin operating their new line.

To the members and followers of the Communist Party, whom the terrific shock of the Stalin-Hitler pact is forcing to think and think hard, we make this appeal:

Open your eyes and face the facts! For seven years, from 1929 to 1935, you were kept in the madhouse of 'Third Period' sectarianism, with its frenzied dual unionism and 'social fascism'. Then, upon orders from above, without a word of explanation or discussion, you were suddenly turned right-about-face and driven into the bottomless swamp of popular frontism. For the sake of the 'democratic front' at home and abroad, you were compelled to swallow every sort of abomination and to abandon every idea of socialism and militant class struggle. And now, again at a word from Stalin, and again without explanation or discussion, another sudden right-about-face – a pact with Hitler! The *Daily Worker*, of course, hails, applauds and justifies everything, just as it did yesterday and the day before, for the top Party leadership knows but one law: whatever Stalin says or does is right! But how about you, the rank-and-file membership of the Party, who are sincerely concerned with building an effective Communist movement in this country?

Do you think a genuinely socialist working-class Party capable of coping with the forces of American capitalism and leading the way to a new social order can ever be built up in this way? Do you think that the American working class can ever be led to victory by a party that is utterly devoid of conviction or principle or even elementary political decency, by a party that is merely

a mechanical puppet rigidly controlled and manipulated by strings reaching from Moscow? Do not you see that by serving such a party you are really being exploited for ends that have nothing to do with Communism or the interests of the working masses of the world? Is it not time to brush aside illusions, no matter how deeply cherished, and look the facts straight in the face?

If you want to have your efforts really count in advancing the cause of socialism and working-class struggle, we call upon you to join the Independent Labor League of America. In the ILLA you will find an organization firm in its devotion to the tested principles of militant socialism but realistic and flexible in tactics; an organization that is an organic part of the American labor movement and cannot be driven from one extreme to the other by orders from the outside; an organization that frames its policies, independently and democratically, to meet the needs and promote the interests of the working masses and stands responsible for these policies before the whole labor movement. If you want to do your bit for the victory of socialism in this country, your place is the ILLA!

11. Keep America Out of War! Unite for Peace, Freedom and Socialism!

Appeal of the National Convention of the Independent Labor League of America to the American People²⁸

World war has begun! The flames burning on the margins of Europe, in Ethiopia and in Spain have eaten their way into the center and burst into general conflagration. As we meet in convention, big guns are blasting away old frontiers; bombs are destroying ancient and populous cities; and the madness of wholesale slaughter of man by man has begun on a scale unparalleled in human history.

The seeds sown by the last war and its brutal imperialist peace have begun to bear their new fruit. The Versailles structure has collapsed, and with it the League of Nations. The Socialist (Second) International died in the last war as a result of its own treachery to the cause of peace and socialism. The Communist (Third) International, built to replace it, pronounced its own death-sentence on the eve of this second world war by helping to prepare it, when its totalitarian one-man leader, Joseph Stalin, entered into a pact with Adolf Hitler, father of the 'Anti-Comintern Axis'. Indeed, the Stalin-Hitler pact served as the go-ahead signal for Germany's invasion of Poland and the opening of general war.

In the name of the peoples of all countries in the name of the great mass of working men and framers, in the name of all the millions who are called upon to make up the rank-and-file of all the armies and slaughter others like themselves with whom they have no quarrel, in the name of the teeming populations of the great cities, of the old men and women and children to whom war spells suffering and naught but suffering, in the name of all but the little handful of rulers and exploiters and profiteers who coin money from human blood,

²⁸ Resolution adopted by the National Convention of the ILA, 2-4 September 1939, New York City. First published in *Workers Age*, 16 September 1939, pp. 1, 3. Reprinted as a four-page leaflet.

in the name of all the mass of mankind in all lands of the earth we declare:
this is not our war!

What Kind of War is This?

What kind of war is this that the peoples of the world are called upon to wage on each other? What kind of war is this that powerful ruling groups in America will now call upon us to enter?

This second world war is neither more nor less than the continuation of the first. It represents the same imperialist conflicts for territory, for markets, for spheres of influence and investment, continued anew after a brief breathing spell. It represents an attempt by the defeated powers to revise the ruthless 'peace' treaty of 1919 and write their own treaty in yet more ruthless terms. It represents an attempt on the part of the victorious powers to hold onto their blood-gains. It shows beyond the shadow of a doubt that no 'preventative war' ever prevents the next war, that no 'wars to end war' do more than sow the seeds of future wars, that no ruthless peace can ever be ruthless enough to do more than prepare the next conflict, that so long as profits are set above human life, the world will continue to stagger from wars to bigger wars, from bloodshed to greater bloodshed, from ruin to more universal ruin, till civilization even in the imperfect forms in which we know it, will give way to universal brutality and chaos. If we permit ourselves to be dragged into this war, if we permit it to be ended by the same ruling cliques who began it, unless the peoples of the world who have nothing to gain and everything to lose by war take the control of their destinies into their own hands and themselves determine the peace and create a system where not profit but human welfare is the aim and object of all production, unless and until the world's producers are willing and able to make the world that they have built theirs, war will continue in ever more bloody forms.

We must not let ourselves be blinded by fine phrases designed by 'statesmen' to cover up their crimes against their own peoples and to sprinkle the reeking blood with holy water of 'noble' causes. We must not be deceived by the emphasis that will be placed upon the especially brutal and authoritarian form of the new regime in countries like Germany. All governments, without exception, make war upon their own peoples to drive them into the trenches and to stifle their natural opposition to inhuman butchery of their own and their fellow men. All governments, as soon as they prepare to enter into war, set up brutal, ruthless, authoritarian, military dictatorships to suppress opposition, to persecute dissent, to frame-up, silence, jail, and slaughter

all who oppose the senseless participation in mass butchery. Germany but mirrors the regimes being established in France and England today, the regime that will be installed in America tomorrow if we can be driven into the war, the regime that the Roosevelt administration, and the Coolidge-Hoover administrations before him, have been secretly, now more and more openly, preparing. Germany started earlier and went farther because its whole course was set since Versailles on the rewriting of that treaty by force. In fact, the totalitarian regime in Germany, like growing totalitarianism everywhere, is nothing but a result of the last war, ironically called a war for democracy. Another war will not end it but extend it to include all governments that enter on either side.

The nature of modern capitalist war is such that it embraces, and must embrace, the entire population and all branches of agriculture and industry. It prescribes who must go to the front, who works at one thing or another, what must be produced and what sold and what said and what thought and what done. It brooks no opposition, permits no individual freedom, no human rights. Everything, every life, every deed, is directed to the single aim of mass slaughter. In short, in every country, *war today is total war*. If we would stop totalitarianism here at home, we must stop our own war makers. If they have their way, totalitarianism is inevitable here.

It is in this light that we must examine all the hypocritical claims that this is a war not for markets, resources, colonies and spheres of influence, but for 'ideals' and 'ideology'. We heard that before, and were driven into bloodshed under the sweet strains of 'war to end war' and 'war to make the world safe for democracy'. We were 'victorious'. What were the results? Millions of dead and wounded and maimed, thousands of new millionaires, a long period of reaction, unemployment on a scale never known in history, unpaid debts, billion-dollar budgets and deficits, intolerable taxes, spreading totalitarianism in a world 'safeguarded for democracy', and the blood-nourished seeds of new wars.

Are we to be asked to enter the present slaughter in the name of the defense of democracy? Poland is no less of a dictatorship than Germany. Or 'self-determination'? Talk of 'self-determination' with Germany throttling the peoples of Czecho-Slovakia under its iron heel and England and France holding scores of millions in subjection in their colonial empires! Against totalitarianism? But every country becomes totalitarian as soon as it undertakes to wage a modern war.

We cannot now foretell the outcome of the war that has just begun. But one thing is certain: its first result will be totalitarianism everywhere. And this time, so deeply rooted and universal that no country will be able ever again to

dismantle its authoritarian machinery short of an uprising of its own people against its own military, war-making machine.

And another thing is certain: that any war thus fought and any 'peace' treaty written by those who wrote the last one, can only sow the seeds of fresh unemployment, fresh economic, cultural and social decay, and fresh and yet more bloody wars. If German imperialism had won the last war, the result would have been no different. Whichever gang of war makers wins, the results are inevitably the same. For this reason, too, we declare in answer to all hypocritical slogans: *this war is not our war!*

To this great mass of our fellow countrymen, to the working men and farmers, to the tens of millions of young men who would be driven into the slaughter to kill men against whom they have no quarrel and die under false slogans for causes that are not theirs, we say in no uncertain terms that our first duty to ourselves and our fellow Americans is to keep America out of this war. . . .

How to Keep America Out of War

In 1914 we were a people unversed in the ways of modern diplomacy and full of illusions about our own democracy. We did not sense until too late the power of our own money-kings to plunge us into war and fancied that there was no danger of our involvement. When we elected a president because 'he kept us out of war', he had already made the commitments for our entrance. We believed every cock-and-bull story about the noble nature of that war.

Today we know better. No man today is so blind that he does not see the danger of our involvement. Rather, the chief danger now is that of fatalism and passivity, the belief that we cannot stop the war profiteers, money-kings and the officials who serve them, from bringing us into the war. But we who have nothing to gain by war are the overwhelming majority of the nation and we can stop it if we are determined to do so and organized and united for the purpose. It is true that there are powerful interests eager to involve us. But they can, they must, be stopped!

We cannot put any trust in the present administration. President Roosevelt has secretly, then more and more openly, committed us as far as he has been able, to the side of Anglo-French imperialism, has arranged secret naval and military conversations with the British and French admirals and generals. The accident of a falling plane in California revealed the presence of a French aviation mission here, kept secret from Congress and the American people. This is 'democracy' when war is being prepared. We must act now to tie the hands of

the President, and any other president, Republican or Democratic, who may succeed him in 1940, and to restrict his arbitrary power to involve us in war. We must take out of the hands of the President the power to make commitments behind the back of Congress and the people: *not more power to the executive but less is the road to safety!*

We must strengthen the present neutrality legislation by extending the mandatory embargo on arms and munitions to an embargo on all materials of war and by restoring the cash-and-carry provisions for all other trade with belligerents. We must put every obstacle in the way of economic entanglements in the European conflict.

Nor can we leave to Congress the chance to determine our fate behind our backs. We must pass the LaFollette-Ludlow war-referendum amendment giving the people themselves the right to vote on whether or not to declare war. If we cannot vote on this question, involving our very lives, then what does our democracy amount to in an hour when a handful of big bankers and their political instruments can plunge us into war?

We must organize all opponents of war in the already existing and powerful federation of peace societies, labor and youth organizations, known as the 'Keep America out of War Congress'.

The organized labor movement must become the backbone of this movement to keep America out of war.

We of the Independent Labor League of America appeal to all progressive working men and women who understand that in the end war can be abolished only by international solidarity and the establishment of socialism, to join our organization, and we pledge ourselves to work for the unity of all those who are against war and for socialism in this country and throughout the world.

Working men and women of America, let our watchword be: *this is not our war!*

Stretch the hand of brotherhood to the workers of Germany and Poland, England and France, across all frontiers, to all lands!

Down with war, the warmongers, and the war-making imperialist profit system!

Down with totalitarianism and military dictatorship!

For peace, freedom and socialism!

Keep America out of war!

For a warless world!

12. Russia Invades Poland, Ready for Grab: Russo-German Partition of Poland Seen Looming: ‘Peace-Offensive’ Expected²⁹

Soviet Russia launched its invasion of Poland last Sunday [17 September 1939] as part of the Russo-German plan to overwhelm Poland and partition it between these two big powers. This plan was already worked out in all essentials when the Soviet-Reich treaty was signed some weeks ago. But before Russia could take active military steps, it was necessary for it to obtain a measure of security on its Asiatic frontiers. Towards the middle of last week, through the energetic efforts of German diplomacy, an armistice was signed between Russia and Japan on the Manchukuoan front, where a great deal of fighting had been going on, and there were indications that this armistice might lead to a ‘non-aggression’ pact, thus extending the new Berlin-Moscow axis to Tokyo. The effects of the Soviet-Japanese rapprochement made themselves felt immediately. Japan, freed from fears for the Manchukuoan border, started a general offensive in central China. And Russia, waiting, as military observers had predicted, until the German forces reached the Bialystok-Brest-Lwow line, launched its invasion along the entire Polish frontier from Polozk in the North to Kamenets-Podolski in the South.

News of the invasion came first from Dr. Goebbels’s Propaganda Ministry in Berlin, which announced that Russian troops had marched into Poland on Sunday morning at 4 a.m., Moscow time (Saturday, 11 p.m., New York time), with Germany’s full approval. A few hours later, Premier Molotov made an official declaration, ‘explaining’ the Russian move. Using almost the identical phrases with which Hitler had justified the seizure of Czecho-Slovakia, he declared the Russian invasion was undertaken in order to ‘protect our brothers in the (Polish) Ukraine and White Russia’. ‘Poland has ceased to exist’, the Russian Premier proclaimed, and the ‘collapse and incapability of the Polish government’ made it necessary for Russia to intervene in order to ‘liberate the Polish people’. Nevertheless, Premier Molotov declared, Russia

29 *Workers Age*, 23 September 1939, p. 1.

was 'maintaining its neutrality', the military action being in the nature of a 'police measure' rather than warlike intervention. Notes to this effect were sent to England, France and the neutrals, but it was not yet apparent what the Anglo-French attitude to the Russian action would be.

The Russo-German plan for the partition of Poland, it was reliably stated, consisted in the division of that country into three or even four parts – one section going to Germany; another to Russia; a third remaining nominally 'independent' but actually constituting a buffer puppet state; and a fourth, around Vilna, going to Lithuania. In addition, Moscow and Berlin apparently had some understanding as to the division of spheres of influence on the European continent, Russia getting a free hand in the Baltic 'border-states' and Germany in southeastern Europe, including the Balkans. Russia was understood to be interested in the 'return' of Bessarabia, now under Romanian control.

From all indications, the German plans, seconded by Russia and Italy, included a 'peace-offensive' once Poland was overrun and partitioned. A puppet government would be set up with which Berlin and Moscow would make peace – on their own terms, of course. Then Germany would declare the war to be over and would call upon England and France to cease hostilities since the Polish government no longer desired their assistance. Very likely, Mussolini would emerge as intermediary and peace-maker. There were even rumours in Berlin and Rome that the Italian Premier might call upon President Roosevelt, with whom he was said to have good relations, to convoke a peace conference. The attitude of the Allies to such a development could not be foretold with any confidence last week, despite the positiveness of the official 'pledges' given in London and Paris.

The second week of the European war brought no surprises or unexpected developments. Germany continued to push through Poland with little effective resistance except at Warsaw, where the Nazi forces were stopped for over a week. On the Western front, the French continued their preliminary activities to establish contact with the German forces at the West wall. Fighting grew a little heavier but there were still no indications that large-scale warfare of decisive significance was in the offing. Nor were there yet any signs on either side of the use of the air force as an independent arm to bomb key centers of political and economic importance, such as London, Berlin or Paris.

Britain bent its energies mainly on perfecting measures for the 'economic strangulation' of Germany. Germany had been declared blockaded the week before and now London issued stringent regulations to the smaller neutral states around Germany virtually ordering them to break all trade relations with the Reich.

13 ...And Now Finland³⁰

Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and now Finland! In less than three months, the new Stalinist imperialism, with the connivance and support of its Fascist ally in Germany, has trodden roughshod over the prostrate bodies of five conquered peoples. Poland overwhelmed and partitioned; Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania swallowed up through military occupation and 'mutual assistance' pacts; Finland bombed, invaded, overrun. . . . Here, indeed, is one field where Stalin has, in three short months, 'overtaken and surpassed' the capitalist imperialism which he has now apparently taken as his model.

We will not insult the intelligence of our readers or sully these columns with any examination of the foul pretexts which the diplomatic and journalistic flunkies of the Russian dictator have concocted in order to 'justify' their master's bloody deeds. What need is there of that? Stalin is obviously copying and improving upon the most odious features of the imperialism that Moscow was once wont to denounce: the propaganda and provocation technique of the Nazis in Czecho-Slovakia and Poland; the unprovoked assault upon a small nation as practiced by the British in South Africa against the Boers; the method of control through a puppet government as exemplified by Japan in Manchukuo and China. These are the true models and sources of inspiration of the *Führer* in the Kremlin.

In December 1917, the new revolutionary government of Lenin freely recognised the independence of Finland, though dominated by a bourgeois, pro-German regime, on the general principle of national self-determination. Today, 22 years later, the counter-revolutionary government of Stalin is overwhelming that country with fire and sword in order to destroy its independence and convert it into a vassal-state. This is the measure of the 22 years from Lenin to Stalin, a measure of degradation of once revolutionary Russia.

What is Stalin out for in his mad course of imperialist aggression? One thing is certain, it is not the interests of the Russian masses that concern him, any more than the interests of the German masses concern Hitler in his aggressions. The 'national interests' that Stalin is pursuing are the interests of

30 *Workers Age*, 9 December 1939, p. 4.

the dominant clique in the Kremlin, the totalitarian-bureaucratic state that holds the Russian people in a bloody grip. Military and economic objectives do play their role but, at bottom, what we are witnessing is an attempt of the Stalin dictatorship, driven by the accumulation of inner crises and the utter bankruptcy of its foreign policy, to seek salvation in the traditional device of despotisms at the end of their rope – in glittering adventures of foreign conquest. It hopes to bolster its rule by arousing wild jingoistic passions among the Russian people, by diverting the attention of the Russian masses at home to drams of national chauvinism and military 'glory' abroad. The alliance with Hitler and the reversion to old-line imperialistic power politics are the plainest possible indication that the reactionary clique in the Kremlin has just about exhausted the vast social resource left in its hands by the Russian Revolution, that it can no longer look to any great 'victories' at home on the front of 'socialist construction', where the deepest crisis prevails, and that its only hope of survival lies along the road of predatory aggression and militaristic adventures.

To what can the Finnish people now look for a restoration of their independence? To the Allies, whose treacherous leaders only yesterday offered to let Stalin keep his share of the Polish loot with their blessings if only he would break with Hitler, and who are today probably making the same offer with respect to Finland? To fanciful speculations of an imminent rupture between Moscow and Berlin? No; the only hope of the Finnish people is a revolutionary upsurge in Russia that will overthrow Stalin and his counterrevolutionary regime and will once again raise aloft the banner of socialism, freedom and national self-determination. Such a revolutionary upsurge in Russia, it is our profound conviction, must come sooner or later.

Stalinist Russia no longer has anything positive to contribute to the worldwide labor and socialist struggle for emancipation. The bloody farce of the puppet government of the 'Democratic Republic of Finland', the creature of Russian arms, is a shame and dishonor to the very name of democracy and the people. Never yet has freedom been bestowed upon the masses at the point of a foreign bayonet or the blessing of socialism rained down with bombs from the airplanes of a conqueror. The Stalinist regime has become a reactionary and hostile power in every sense of the word. If socialism is to make headway, if freedom is to triumph, if any of the great economic and social achievements that still remain of the Russian Revolution are to be preserved, the barbarous dictatorship in the Kremlin and its degraded, servile henchmen elsewhere must be swept away.

14. The New Imperialism of Stalinist Russia³¹

Will Herberg

Who, 10 months ago, would have ventured to predict that before the year was up Soviet Russia would have embarked upon an imperial career of aggression and armed conquest? Even those of us who insistently forecast a Stalin-Hitler accord did not envisage such an outcome. And yet it has happened indeed, it is already taken for granted as one of the 'facts of the situation'. With such breakneck speed does history move these days!

Stalinist Self-Justification

What is this new Soviet policy of aggression and conquest initiated with the overrunning of Poland? Where does it come from and what does it mean? We gain no light on these questions from the official 'explanations' advanced by the Stalinist spokesmen in Moscow or New York. For these 'explanations' are really no more than official apology, in brazen disregard of the most obvious facts. In the first place, there are the usual governmental propaganda lies that have done service to justify aggression for these many thousands of years. Coming from Moscow, they sound like a weird parody of the outpourings of Herr Goebbels's Ministry of Enlightenment. Then there is the appeal to nationalism, even to racialism – the stress on 'national interests' and 'military necessity', on the plight of 'our blood-brothers' (Molotov's phrase, a translation of the Nazi *Rassengenossen*) under foreign rule. Finally, because of the peculiar ideological background of the Stalin imperialism, there is the appeal to 'revolution', with all the trappings of a puppet 'Revolutionary People's Government' of Finland. Diplomatic concoctions, the call to nationalism and race, the mockery of sham 'revolution' – these constitute the threefold self-justification of Stalinist aggression today.

31 *Workers Age*, 30 December 1939, pp. 1, 3; 6 January 1940, pp. 1, 4; 13 January 1940, p. 3.

It is hardly necessary to waste much time over the first two lines of approach; they impress us no more when coming from Moscow than when coming from Berlin. The attempt at a 'revolutionary' appeal may detain us a little longer. In the columns of the Stalinist press or in the mouths of Stalinist spokesmen, such an appeal sounds so utterly shameless, so grotesquely false and withal so inept, that it can hardly be said to make any impression at all. But here Stalin finds a most unexpected advocate – none other than Trotsky! It is in the Trotskyist press that the 'revolutionary' justification of Stalinist aggression is made with vigour and, apparently, with sincerity.

Main Line of the Trotskyist Apology

The main line of the Trotskyist justification of the new Stalin imperialism, a justification that is naturally indirect, unofficial and entirely thankless, seems to be that Stalin's 'objectives' are fundamentally right and proper but that his 'means and methods' are bad; that Stalin is doing in his 'bureaucratic' way what Trotsky would do in his 'revolutionary' way – but doing essentially the same thing. A careful reading of the three main Trotskyist documents on the Finnish crisis – the editorials of the 1 and 16 December [1939] issues of the *Socialist Appeal* and a statement of the Socialist Workers Party in the 9 December issue – indicate this very clearly. In addition, the Trotskyites make an analysis of the Finnish situation which not only echoes the Stalinist analysis point-by-point but in the end leads to the conclusion that the Russian invader is to be supported by the workers of Finland and of the outside world. What more could Stalin want?

The Trotskyist argument that leads to so remarkable a conclusion begins with the assertion that 'Finland is not an independent small state fighting for its independence against an imperialist power. Bourgeois Finland is and always has been a vassal-state of the imperialists' (SWP statement). It is quite true that Finland, bourgeois Finland, is a small state in the orbit of British imperialism, but that does not make it less of a 'small state fighting for its independence', nor does it in any way justify invasion in order to crush and annex it. Loyalist Spain was also a 'bourgeois vassal' of imperialism, of Anglo-French imperialism, as the Trotskyites never tired of pointing out. Yet the Italo-German assault on Loyalist Spain (this was one aspect of the Civil War, although not the only one) was not thereby rendered blameless. Ethiopia, too, was a small state (not even bourgeois but feudal in character) in the orbit of Anglo-American imperialism; indeed, it was 'guided' by English and American 'advisers'. Was the Italian assault upon Ethiopia therefore justified? We gave our sympathy

and support to the Ethiopian and Spanish peoples against the foreign invaders despite the fact that their governments were linked up with imperialist powers; certainly, we did not justify the invasion or ask the threatened peoples to side with the invader!

Oh, but this is a 'war of the Finnish bourgeois government against the Soviet Union', rejoin the Trotskyites (SWP statement). Yes, the Finnish bourgeoisie, in this case backed by the masses of the people, are fighting to beat back the Russian invader. But again, the Ethiopian feudal chieftains fought to beat back the Italian invader; yet it was no war of Ethiopia *against* Italy. The Republican bourgeoisie of Loyalist Spain fought to beat back the Italo-German invader; yet that did not make it a war of Spain *against* Italy and Germany. Why then is it now a war of Finland against Russia rather than a war of Russia against Finland? Or perhaps Finland is the 'aggressor', as the *Daily Worker* tells us.

Blessings at the Point of the Bayonet

As the Trotskyites continue their apology, they sink deeper and deeper into the mire of Stalinism. After a certain point, it appears that conquest by the Russian army is actually desirable! 'In the present revolutionary struggle', the Socialist Workers Party's declaration tells us, 'a victory of the Red Army is a "lesser evil" than the victory of the army of the Finnish puppet government of Wall Street and London'. Such a statement would make sense only if it were seriously maintained that the Russian army is actually bringing the Finnish masses socialism and freedom at the point of the bayonet – which we may be permitted to doubt. On what other ground is a victory of the Russian army the 'lesser evil'? Certainly the blessings of Stalin's GPU 'socialism' and 'democracy' are not enough to account for it. And no mystical reference to the 'economic foundations laid down by the October Revolution' will do.

A variant of this same type of argument, not so absurd on the face of it, is the contention that Russian conquest would at least result in an advance in the economic relations of the conquered countries if not to socialism, at any rate to a higher level, in the sense that a nationalized ('statified') economy is on a higher level as compared with private capitalism. Even if this were true, and it would be interesting to know what economic changes the invading Russian armies are actually introducing into the conquered countries, it is no justification of invasion or conquest and no reason why the people of these countries should accept or welcome it. In fact, this is imperialism's favorite form of self-justification; the English, in particular, never tire of boasting of having brought the more advanced institutions of capitalism to backward Africa and Asia.

Undoubtedly they have; only they have brought many other things as well, all summed up in the hated words, foreign rule. And the case is but little different with the new Russian imperialism.

Apparently, even the Trotskyites realize that the prospect of conquest by the Russian army and incorporation in the Stalinist realm is hardly entrancing enough in any form, and so they come out with great intrepidity in favor of an 'independent Soviet Finland' (SWP statement). That is very noble, no doubt, but under present circumstances it appears somewhat of a pious platitude. Worse than a pious platitude if it means opposition to the national self-determination and independence of a Finland that may not be Soviet. Thus, being for an 'independent Soviet China' is all very well, but what would this slogan rally mean if it implied hostility to the struggle of Nationalist China, Chiang Kai-shek's China, against Japanese aggression?

Denounce Stalin – But Support Him!

But we cannot fight the Red Army, comes the last desperate plea. 'Only agents of imperialism, standing for the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union, can desire the defeat of the Red Army', the SWP statement proclaims in thunder tones. We are not impressed one bit. Such a conception means simply that we must go along with every atrocity Stalin chooses to commit, once he sends out his Red Army to enforce that atrocity! We may criticise his policies all right, the Trotskyites tell us, but once he starts military operations and throws his armies into action, then we must support him – for we cannot 'desire the defeat of the Red Army'. We may denounce the invasion but we must support the invader! It is a case of 'My country, right or wrong', only in this case, Stalin is 'my country'. Thank you, not for us!

By this time, it is abundantly clear that the Trotskyist position is in essence a mere repetition of the Stalinist 'arguments', a sham 'revolutionary' apology for Stalin's aggressions, tempered with the usual routine denunciations of 'Stalinist bureaucracy'.³² With all their super-revolutionary 'dialectics', the Trotskyites cannot make the new Stalin imperialism palatable to anyone who still possesses the least spark of democratic or socialist decency.

Much more to the point than all of the pseudo-'revolutionary' beating around the bush of the Trotskyites is the straight Stalinist plea of military

32 It need not surprise the reader to find Trotsky playing the role of apologist for Stalin. After all, Trotskyism is in essence an inverted, frustrated Stalinism.

necessity, cynical but revealing. Russia must dominate the Baltic in order to control vital military positions and to forestall their seizure by another power as a basis of hostile military operations. This argument rings familiarly in our ears; it is the unfailing argument of every imperialist power bent on aggression, made with equal justice by Hitler with regard to the Sudeten region or by the United States with regard to Puerto Rico. Indeed, on that ground, the United States is entitled to the whole Caribbean, to Mexico, to all of Central America! If Stalinist Russia argues in such terms, it only means that Stalinist Russia argues in the traditional terms of imperialism. It must therefore expect to be judged as any other imperialist power is judged!

Power Politics with a Difference

The policy of aggression and foreign conquest which Stalin initiated some months ago with the overrunning of Poland and which has since extended to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland and may tomorrow spread to the Scandinavian and Balkan countries, is essentially an expression of Russian power politics as moulded by the Stalin-Hitler alliance.

In the past, Russian foreign policy also operated in terms of power politics, but it was power politics with a difference. Up to 1934, the main strategy of Russian diplomacy was to divide the imperialist powers confronting it, to play off one group against the other, to support every movement against imperialism, militarism and war, to appeal to the masses of Western Europe and America for peace and disarmament. The trump-card in its hands was its emphatic renunciation of all thought of foreign conquest and imperialistic aggression. In other words, it was hard-boiled power politics all right, but power politics rooted in a keen recognition that a clean record, freedom from suspicion of imperialistic designs and a genuinely idealistic appeal to the masses really constitute an enormous source of power in international politics.

In 1934, there was the first sharp change. In the period of popular frontism, Russian foreign policy became power politics within the framework of the 'status quo' front of the 'sated' powers. It abandoned its internationalism, its idealism, its anti-imperialism, its opposition to war and armaments. In fact, Stalin emphatically endorsed Anglo-French imperialism and militarism. But Moscow could exhibit no aggressive trends in this period because it was playing the part of a 'sated' power in a so-called 'peace front', presumably dedicated to 'stopping aggressors' intent on disturbing the post-war status quo. And the abandonment of the earlier idealism and internationalism was largely hidden by the deceptive appeal of the popular front.

Last August [1939] there came another sharp turn. With the Stalin-Hitler pacts, Russia left the 'status quo' front of the 'sated' powers and joined the 'smash-the-status-quo' front of the 'hungry' powers.³³ The Russian Foreign Office now began playing power politics in terms of its new alignment, and that meant as an 'aggressor' power. It was thus the integration of Soviet Russia into the Hitler front of 'hungry' powers that made possible the outcropping and open expression of the predatory impulses of the new Stalin imperialism. The Stalin-Hitler pact gave the 'go-ahead' signal, so to speak.

But what converted the possibility into an actuality? What are the active driving forces of the new policy of aggression and armed conquest? Here we face a problem not only difficult in itself but one to which no serious study has yet been given, because of the recency and suddenness of the manifestation. There is little that is puzzling in the expansionism of powers like Great Britain or Germany; the imperialistic pressures generated by the economic system of finance-capitalism are fairly well understood. But these economic pressures can hardly be said to exist in Russia. What then is behind the drive to expansion?

I think it must be granted that economic considerations are of little importance in this connection. From the point of view of the Russian economy, the seizure of eastern Poland with its marshes and wooded regions was not altogether a blessing. It is true there are said to be important nickel deposits in Finland, and nickel is one of the few raw materials Russia needs; but this factor can hardly be regarded as decisive in launching an entirely new foreign policy of the most momentous consequences.

Of far more importance are military considerations. There can be little question that the possession of naval bases and military outposts on the Baltic is of considerable advantage to Soviet Russia from the standpoint of 'national defense', just as the possession of the Sudeten area is of advantage to Hitler from the same standpoint. Such considerations undoubtedly exert a powerful influence on the powers-that-be in the Kremlin, even though 'military necessity' as a motive for invasion and armed conquest of neighbouring states is thoroughly imperialistic in character. But even from the strictly practical viewpoint, it is more than doubtful whether, in the case of Russia, such military-geographical advantages at all compensate for the loss of what has hitherto been the Soviet Union's chief bulwark of defense – the confidence, sympathy

33 No better indication of the merely relative validity of the concept of 'sated' and 'hungry' powers is needed than that Russia could turn from one into the other in the twinkling of an eye.

and good will of the great masses of the people throughout the world. Here too, a little idealism might in the long run prove to be the most realistic and far-sighted policy.

While military considerations undoubtedly do play an important part, there must be other factors involved, for certainly purely military considerations could never have dictated the seizure of eastern Poland. A most decisive factor, in my opinion, is the pressure of the desperate political crisis of the Stalin regime at home. I think there is enough evidence to indicate that the Stalin regime finds itself in a most difficult position today. There is no longer any real prospect of great successes on the economic front at home; indeed, the Stalinist press has virtually stopped boasting of economic triumphs. Instead, the effects of accumulating difficulties and failures are beginning to tell. Purges and repressions have multiplied discontent and created an explosive atmosphere of tension and uncertainty that bodes ill for the regime. Nor has the undeniable fiasco of yesterday's 'democratic' foreign policy failed to leave its effects, to which must be added the widespread confusion and perplexity that the sudden Hitler alliance has brought. All in all, a situation charged with dangerous possibilities for the powers-that-be in the Kremlin!

Salvation through Foreign Adventure

Now it has always been the favorite device of despotic regimes in difficulties to seek a way out in foreign adventures. 'Foreign quarrels' to divert 'giddy minds' from looking 'too near unto my state', as Shakespeare puts it, has ever been the favorite resort of governments as far back as recorded history goes. In Stalin's case, the compulsions towards such a policy as well as its advantages from the point of view of the regime are not very difficult to see.

Foreign adventures, if successful, enable the regime to consolidate army support. Nothing so feeds the loyalty of armies towards their leaders and the government as the glory of victory, the glory of military achievement. Popular support, too, is bolstered and immensely strengthened by successful foreign adventures – at least for a while. The regime is able to cash in on its success in 'enlarging the realm', which thrills the heart of every patriotic citizen, in Russia as in Germany. Hitler's favorite title is said to be '*Reichsmehrer*', 'Enlarger of the Realm', and we may be quite sure that Stalin is being hailed with its Russian equivalent in the controlled Soviet press. Foreign adventures stimulate, as nothing else can, the wild emotions of chauvinism, nationalism, even racialism (remember Molotov's 'blood-brothers'), which effectively drown out

domestic discontent – for the time being.³⁴ Yes, there is nothing quite like foreign conquest and military glory for a despotic regime that is striving to maintain itself against the threat of accumulating internal crises!

A policy of aggression and foreign conquest is never pursued in its naked form; it is always swathed in ideological camouflage appropriate to the social character of the regime that is pursuing it. In the case of the new Stalin imperialism, this ideological camouflage takes on three forms. There are, first of all, the usual governmental propaganda lies, a grotesque parody of the kind of stuff that is issued by Herr Goebbels's office. Then there are the appeals to nationalistic and racialistic emotions (again remember Molotov's 'blood-brothers'). Finally, there is a type of camouflage, for obvious reasons particularly characteristic of the Stalin imperialism – the sham 'revolutionary' appeal. This type of appeal, in the form in which it is presented by the Trotskyist advocates of Stalinism, I have already examined at some length...

Blessings at the Point of the Bayonet

What is Stalinist aggression actually bringing to the conquered peoples in Poland, in the Baltic states, in Finland? Certainly not socialism and freedom. These blessings cannot in the nature of the case be bestowed upon an unwilling people at the point of a foreign bayonet. And even if that were possible, socialism and freedom are not a commodity that Stalinist Russia has any to give away. Where would Stalin get it for export? Certainly there is not any to be found in Russia. The very notion that the Stalinist counterrevolutionary dictatorship can possibly bring socialism and freedom to the peoples it conquers is surely too grotesque to require extended refutation.

To the degree that it serves Stalin's military-political purposes, certain changes in the economic structure and property relations of the conquered countries are brought about in adaptation to the Russian system, to some extent in Poland and Finland, to none at all in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. But everywhere conquest means national and political oppression under

34 Of course, all this amounts to a rather sad commentary on the quality of the two decades of 'socialist education' to which the Russian masses have been exposed. The fine flower of the last stages of this 'education' is perhaps the following speech delivered by the Stakhanovist, Nefedov, at the Kirov dynamo-plant in Moscow, and proudly featured in the entire Russian press: 'We will punch them so hard in the teeth that not one of the gentlemen ruling Finland will be able to gather them all together again. Long live the peace policy of the Soviet government!'

military-totalitarian rule from Moscow. Everywhere conquest means the repression of the genuine socialist and labor movements in the conquered countries.³⁵ In short, the real boons that Stalinist conquest brings in its train are the GPU 'democracy' and a measure of the GPU 'socialism' that the Russian masses are blessed with at home.

Is the new Russian policy of aggression imperialism? If we use the term in its narrow, technical sense defined by Lenin, as an outcropping of monopoly finance capital, obviously we cannot speak of imperialism here. But neither in this sense can we speak of Roman imperialism or the imperialism of Louis Napoleon. If, however, we use the term in its usual and more popular sense as predatory aggression, conquest and appropriation by military force, there cannot be any reasonable doubt that the course upon which Stalin has launched the Soviet Union is a course of imperialism.

Phase of the European War

It would be a mistake to view the Stalinist drive of foreign conquest simply or even primarily from the localised angle of the Baltic or the Balkans. At bottom, it is manifestly an integral aspect of the larger European clash, of the unfolding second world war. In this larger context, Russia is playing the part of a 'hungry' power, cooperating with and following the lead of, some even think outstripping, Nazi Germany in the imperialist game of predatory aggrandisement. But at the same time, Stalin's new imperialism is obviously preparing the way for a united capitalist attack on Russia, which is becoming increasingly possible every day. On the one hand, it greatly facilitates, practically invites, a rapprochement between Anglo-French and German imperialism for a joint

35 The following United-Press dispatch dated 20 October speaks for itself:

'HELSINGFORS, Oct. 20 – Reports from Tallin, Estonia, of wholesale arrests of Estonian Communists were confirmed here today by reliable sources.

Reasons for the arrests were obscure, since Estonia is occupied by Soviet troops, but it was said that a full agreement had been reached by Estonian and Russian officials on a policy whereby any attempts by Estonian Communists to create a new political crisis should be suppressed.

It was reported that many Estonian Communists who had appealed to Russian army-officers on behalf of their imprisoned friends had been given a stern refusal and reply: "In Russia, political agitators of that kind are shot"

What happens to 'political agitators of that kind', that is, to independent Communists, Socialists, and trade unionists, where the GPU rules directly, as it does in eastern Poland and the conquered sections of Finland, may well be imagined.

assault upon the Soviet Union. On the other, it has already deprived Russia of its most reliable support, at least as vital for its defense as its armed forces, and far more vital than naval bases on the Baltic – the sympathy and good will of the popular masses in Western Europe and America. What saved Soviet Russia in the terrible days after the war – the active opposition of the great masses of the people in France and England to the interventionist plans of their governments – can obviously no longer be counted on. Less than a year ago, millions of people in these countries and in the United States were still saying: ‘Of course, Stalin is a dictator; the world is full of them. But at least nobody can charge him with coveting an inch of foreign territory.’³⁶ At least no one can question Russia’s desire for peace or its opposition to fascist aggression’.

Today, there is probably more active hostility towards Soviet Russia than even towards Nazi Germany. Stalin is now the prize-devil, not Hitler. No war would be more popular with the masses of people in this country or in England and France than a crusade against the Russia of Stalin. Such is the pass to which Stalin’s foreign policies have brought the unfortunate land that he holds in the grip of his dictatorship!

Russian Set-Up Today

In the Russia of the new Stalinist imperialism, what is left of the great revolution of 1917?

In the first place there are the economic foundations. The transition from private capitalism to a nationalized (‘statified’) economy is of vast historical significance and is one of the lasting achievements of the Russian Revolution. Nationalized economy is not in itself socialism; far from it. But it is a necessary economic foundation for socialism, or rather a basis on which – given freedom, democracy, and self-administration – socialism may be erected.³⁷

The foundations of a nationalized economy remain in Russia, but they are being increasingly undermined by Stalinism. The dangerously false economic policies which the clique in the Kremlin has followed for the past few years have done untold harm. Perhaps even more damage has been done by the

36 Time was when Stalin was never weary of repeating: ‘The Soviet Union does not covet an inch of soil of other states but will defend every inch of her own soil’.

37 Of course, the development of socialism would involve immense modifications of the existing economic foundations, particularly in the way of decentralization of control, devolution etc.

effects on the economic structure of the widening stratification of Soviet society manifested in the consolidation of a privileged caste of functionaries and by the regime of political totalitarianism with its police-methods of economic administration and its incessant 'purges' and repression. The economic consequences of the new foreign policy of imperialism are yet to make themselves felt, but they will undoubtedly be serious.

In the second place, contemporary Russia has inherited from the revolutionary Russia of former days a system of institutions that drag on a sort of half-existence in the shadow land of vestigial and atrophied forms. These institutions of early Soviet political life, still recorded in the Russian 'constitution', bear about as much relation to existing political reality in Russia as the Weimar constitution, which has not yet been nullified or repealed, bears to existing political reality in Germany. Yet these institutions are by no means completely dead; they are rather in a state of suspended animation and, if they can be revived soon enough, they may yet come to play a decisive role in Russian life.

In the third place, there is the historical tradition of the November Revolution and the political ideology of Leninist Communism. Both have been so unscrupulously disfigured, so falsified, that it may well be questioned whether they can still be regarded as active forces. Yet I believe that there is still considerable power in them, as we may perhaps come to learn in a future not too distant.

Upon the foundation of the nationalized economy, there has been erected, for reasons that cannot be examined here, not a socialist democracy but a political superstructure of totalitarian military-police dictatorship, ruled by a privileged bureaucratic caste organized in a hierarchical Party-state structure topped by the personal dictatorship of The Leader. This is the Stalin regime.

The ruling bureaucratic caste normally frames its policies with an eye primarily to its own narrow caste interests. Of course, to a certain degree it is also compelled to defend the economic foundations against the restoration of private capitalism, since the nationalized economy is the soil out of which it draws its sustenance, its power and privileges. But since its caste interests stand in irreconcilable and growing contradiction to the imperative demands of the economic system, the Stalin regime, through its very efforts to maintain and perpetuate itself, systematically undermines and corrodes the nationalized economy on which it rests. In fact, the nationalized economy finds in Stalinism its most dangerous foe.

Such, in brief outline, is the present set-up in Soviet Russia. What kind of set-up is it? It is not capitalism; nor is it socialism. It is not proletarian dictatorship as conceived by Marx, Lenin and Luxemburg; nor is it the Fascism that prevails in Germany and Italy, although it shares with Fascism its totalitarianism and

leader-cult, and some claim to see a convergence of economic structure. As a matter of fact, the present day Russian economy and Russian state simply cannot be described in traditional terminology. They constitute an essentially new historical phenomenon describable only in its own terms.

Meaning of 'Defence'-Slogan

From this point of view, what meaning has the formula, 'Defense of the Soviet Union' today? To speak of the 'unconditional defense of the Soviet Union', as do the Trotskyites (SWP statement), is little short of farcical. It is of a piece with the rest of the Trotskyist system of Stalinist apologetics.

What do we want to 'defend' in present-day Soviet Russia? Certainly not the political system of totalitarian dictatorship; certainly not the government in the Kremlin; certainly not the Stalin regime. We want to defend what remains of the Russian Revolution, the economic foundations, the nationalized economy, from the danger of the restoration of private capitalism.

Defend how and against whom? Of course, against invaders and forces of restoration. But also against the Stalin dictatorship. For not only is the overthrow of the Stalin regime necessary in order to save what can still be saved of the Russian Revolution; the overthrow of the Kremlin dictatorship is an essential prerequisite for an effective defense against a foreign enemy. Stalinism must be swept away if the Russian people are to be in a position to master the dangers that are confronting them at home and abroad.

Easy victory for the Russian invader in Finland – which hardly seems possible any longer – would immensely strengthen the totalitarian dictatorship in Russia; any sort of victory would operate to some degree in the same direction. Victory for the Russian invader would greatly stimulate the predatory appetites of the new Stalin imperialism and would further demolish what remains of the Russian Revolution. Hence a Stalin victory in Finland would most emphatically not serve the best interests of the Russian people or of world socialism.

The inescapable conclusion of all this is that the 'defense of the Soviet Union' has no meaning whatever for international socialism at the present moment, in connection with the invasion of Finland. It may arise again as a significant slogan tomorrow, or it may not. Certainly, it has no significance today. . . .

15. Resolution on War Policy Adopted by ILLA National Convention, New York, 28–9 December 1940³⁸

This resolution dealing with socialist policy on the war was adopted by the National Convention of the Independent Labor League of America, meeting in New York City on 28 and 29 December 1940. The vote was 22 in favor, two against, with one abstention – Editor, *Workers Age*.)

1 Fundamental Approach

In approaching problems of war and foreign policy, as in other fields, it is necessary to take a positive, responsible attitude. By this is meant that, whenever a great and vital problem confronts the nation, it is the duty of socialists to offer a progressive, democratic program of meeting that problem in the interests of the people, and to counterpose this program to the reactionary programs offered on behalf of privileged groups. We cannot be satisfied with simply repeating the formula, 'Socialism is the only solution', any more than we can in domestic policy. We must outgrow the attitude of ultra-radical abstentionism which still persists in the field of war and foreign policy, although it has been almost completely eliminated in the field of domestic policy. We must learn to offer our progressive programs initiated within the framework of the existing system, while at the same time pointing out the urgent necessity of going beyond this system towards socialism.

38 *Workers Age*, 25 January 1941, pp. 1–2.

2 Character of the War

The present war is an imperialistic war in that it was precipitated as the clash of two gigantic imperialist coalitions and as the continuation of the World War of 1914–18. The major participants in the war are imperialistic powers.

Yet it does make a very real difference who wins the war in terms of immediate prospects for democratic and labor forces throughout the world. The difference may be relatively circumscribed from a long-range historical standpoint but it is vital and decisive nevertheless. From the standpoint of the democratic and labor forces, a victory for Hitler Germany would obviously be vastly more disastrous, and a victory for Britain vastly preferable – although, of course, even the latter would solve nothing fundamental. Only socialism could do that.

The victory of one or the other side cannot reverse the fundamental trend of the decay of capitalism, but it can accelerate or retard the tendency for this trend of decay to manifest itself in the Fascist form. And this is of decisive importance to the forces of democracy and labor. Basically, that is the reason why it does make a real difference who wins, and why a victory for Hitler Germany would be the very worst possible outcome of the war.

Having clearly distinguished this difference, it is necessary to stress that in the long run Europe is doomed unless it can achieve continental integration on the basis of a free and democratic socialism, which, of course, implies an end to the entire imperialist system.

3 Consequences

In the light of this analysis, certain consequences follow:

1. Since at bottom only socialism can ultimately save Europe from utter ruin, and such ruin would seriously affect the entire world, it is our duty today more than ever to advance vigorously our socialist solution in terms as concrete and immediate as possible. It is also our duty to cooperate with and support those socialist forces in Europe who take a fundamentally similar position.

2. Since, furthermore, it does make a difference who wins, in the sense described above, the attitude of socialists cannot be the same in Britain as in Germany.

In Britain, it is the duty of socialists and workers generally to participate with all power at their command in the military struggle against Hitler, that is, to support the war effort. But support of the war effort is only one part of the duty of the British working class; the other part, a major part, is political

struggle against the forces of capitalism and imperialism at home, because only a socialist transformation of Britain and the abandonment of imperialism can provide a new democratic dynamic powerful enough to smash Hitler Germany and destroy the Fascist menace. From every standpoint, including that of defeating Hitler Germany, the labor movement must preserve its independence at all costs and actively strive for a program of radical social and political change through which alone the war can be effectively fought and won, and an order of society established looking towards the eradication of war and oppression.

In Germany, of course, it is the duty of all socialists and anti-Fascists generally, in so far as they can, to obstruct and oppose the prosecution of the war. In Germany, revolutionary defeatism has a meaning in terms of deepest interests of the masses of the German people.

In countries conquered and oppressed by Nazi imperialism, it is the right and the duty of the people to revolt and strive to regain their freedom. At the same time, colonial peoples within the British Empire have a similar right to demand their independence and thus to be free to contribute to the struggle against Fascism, exploitation, and oppression.

3. On the same ground that it does make a real difference who wins, it is also necessary to distinguish our attitude on the question of aid to belligerents.

We are, of course, categorically opposed to any aid whatsoever being given by the United States to Germany, on the grounds that we emphatically do not want Germany to win. Of course, we sympathise with the German people in the suffering brought upon them by Nazism and its wars, and pledge all aid in our power to any effort on their part to throw off the Nazi yoke.

On the other hand, we certainly do want Britain to be aided, and we are in favor of all American aid to Britain subject to the paramount consideration of keeping America out of direct military involvement in foreign wars.

4 **America and Foreign War**

America can keep out of foreign war:

1. Economically: the United States finds itself in a situation almost without parallel in the entire world. For, geographically and economically, it has virtually achieved that continental integration for which Europe has been striving so painfully and so vainly for over a century. Continuous sound functioning of our economic machinery on an expanding scale is quite possible on the basis of our domestic resources, as yet widely untapped, if only our economy

is operated on the principle of welfare rather than that of private profit. Not any inescapable needs of our economy considered as a technological system, but the special interests of powerful exploiting groups in this country are the driving force behind our far-flung financial and commercial entanglements and our imperialistic ventures in all parts of the world. If the interests of the masses of the people constitute the decisive consideration, then it is for us to look to the 'open door' at home, in this hemisphere, rather than in Europe or the Far East.

2. Militarily: in a military-political sense, too, the United States is so situated that it can keep measurably free of foreign entanglements, if only it is determined to do so. On the basis of a defense program directed strictly towards protection against foreign invasion or attack, the United States, according to almost all responsible military opinion, is virtually impregnable. This immense advantage would naturally be lost should this country be plunged into a foreign war.

3. From the standpoint of resisting the challenge of Fascism: of course, the dynamic, expansive force of Fascism would be greatly enhanced by a German victory, and that would be strongly felt in this country as well. But it would still remain true, particularly for the United States, that the danger of Fascism is immensely greater from within than from without. It would still remain true that, if Fascism were ever to come to power in this country, it would be primarily as a result of the utter bankruptcy of our domestic institutions, economic, social and political, and not simply as a result of foreign propaganda or ideological prestige. Our first and foremost line of defense against Fascism remains what it has always been – the fight at home against unemployment, poverty, demoralization, despair. For us in America, the great issue will fundamentally be decided here in this country, in this hemisphere, and not in Europe or Asia.

America must keep out of foreign war. Not only is involvement in foreign war not necessary for the welfare and security of America, but such involvement would do immense damage to American life by unleashing powerful tendencies to universal regimentation, military dictatorship and the drastic curtailment of civil, political, and labor rights; by stimulating jingoistic frenzy and war hysteria that might drive the country back many decades; by bringing about a further dislocation of our economic system, with spreading distress and impoverishment. Moreover, the challenge of domestic fascism would probably reach its most dangerous point during the period of involvement in foreign war, or of a transition from a wartime to a peacetime economy after the war is over. Involvement in foreign war would thus be a very serious threat

to the most promising elements of American life, those elements of freedom, welfare and democracy that we cherish as the point of departure towards a better America.

5 Defense

The greatest confusion prevails in this country today on the problem of defense. It is necessary to distinguish clearly that two fundamentally different things are confused under the single term 'defense': on the one hand, genuine defense of America against invasion or attack; and on the other hand, involvement in foreign wars to protect so-called 'vital interests' that are in the interests of the entrenched privileged groups, not of the masses of the people. It is a stratagem of the pro-war forces to talk in terms of the defense of America against invasion or attack while thinking and acting in terms of involvement in foreign war.

Genuine defense, on the one hand, and preparation for foreign war, on the other, are basically distinct not only in a military way but also in social, economic and political consequences.

We do not take a negative or abstentionist attitude on the problem of defense. We realize the urgency of the problem for the great masses of the American people and we propose the following positive program:

1. In the present international situation as much as at any other time, the only national defense that is consonant with the needs and interests of the American people is defense against invasion or attack. Defense of foreign investments or defense of so-called 'vital interests' in the Far Pacific or in mid-Europe, is not national defense.

2. To the degree that national defense in this sense requires coordination on a hemisphere basis, as it does at many points, this coordination should be achieved through voluntary consultation and cooperation on a plane of equality, with the independence and self-determination of the Latin American countries unimpaired.

It is above all necessary to guard against 'hemisphere defense' being used as a cover for another thrust of Wall Street imperialism against Mexico, Central America and South America.

3. Expenditures for arms should be covered not by cutting down on government social services and mass welfare or by imposing still heavier tax burdens on the people, but by increased income-tax levies in the higher brackets, a 100-percent tax on excess profits of armaments concerns, and the like. If our idle men and idle machines are put to work to a measurable degree and the

national income rose by that much, there should be no real difficulty in covering necessary arms expenditures while maintaining and even raising the levels of welfare.

4. Social and labor legislation, as well as the standards of labor, must be safeguarded and extended. There is already under way an organized attempt of the employing class, aided by important sections of the army and navy bureaucracy, to use the national defense emergency to break down labor standards and virtually annul the progressive legislation of recent years. Labor will need all its realism, unity and constructive militancy to meet this challenge of reaction.

5. The true bulwark of defense is the preservation and extension of democratic civil liberties and the rights of labor. There is a certain tendency in current policy, on the other hand, to fight totalitarianism abroad by copying it here. Democracy has already fallen into considerable disrepute in some official circles in Washington and the totalitarian concept is permeating influential groups throughout the country. As against this trend, it is necessary to stress that a truly popular cause, broad and genuine democracy, can prove just as efficient as totalitarianism and can defeat it on its own ground. Nor would genuinely defensive war against foreign invasion or attack contain that compulsion to rigid military totalitarianism that would inevitably arise in waging a foreign war in Europe or Asia. No ground must be given to the spirit of intolerance born out of the war panic and hysteria sweeping the country.

6. Long-range efforts to overcome the economic crisis must be based on a planned attack on unemployment, poverty and low living standards, not on the hope of building up an arms economy in the United States. Experience has shown that an arms economy – that is, an economic system that depends for its continuous functioning on ever greater armament expenditures – is absolutely fatal to the economic soundness, to the peace and welfare of the country.

At bottom, vigorous, effective national defense is impossible without a deepening and vitalization of democracy in terms of the basic needs and aspirations of the people. A defense that is simply defense of the status quo is futile and self-defeating; it can never acquire that spirit and drive that alone can meet the challenge of totalitarianism. A dynamic democracy, implemented with a program of social reform looking towards socialism, is the only sound foundation of genuine national defense.

At the present time, this program is at variance, in practically every respect, with the current conceptions of leading elements in both major parties. It therefore implies systematic political opposition to these parties, their aims, policies, and programs. It also makes necessary systematic exposure of the deceptive character of the so-called 'defense' plans of imperialistic groups and

their spokesmen in the government; such plans are, in fact, plans of national endangerment rather than national defense.

6 Problems of Hemisphere Unity

As pointed out above, genuine defense against invasion or attack implies at many vital points the close collaboration of all countries in the Western hemisphere. This is but one aspect of the problem, however. Fundamentally, the security and interests of the peoples of the American countries in the present-day world – especially should Hitler succeed in establishing, if only for the time being, and integrated Europe under German hegemony – require the economic integration of the Western hemisphere into a single operating unit along the lines of a self-sustaining economy of welfare and security. Economically and technologically, such integration, though it has its difficulties, is quite possible. The decisive question is how it shall be established, for it may be established in fundamentally different ways: (a) through the ‘big stick’, on the basis of United States domination and at the expense of the other American countries; or (b) through genuine collaboration on the basis of equality in a democratic Pan-American Federation. It is manifestly our duty to advocate and support the second alternative.

Democratic Pan-Americanism includes a number of implications which are of immense importance: support of the democratic forces in Latin America against the elements of dictatorship and pro-Fascism, which the Administration seems ready to whitewash; stimulation of economic development of the Latin American countries along healthy channels in the interests of the peoples of Latin America and the whole hemisphere; closer social and cultural relations; and the like. Of prime importance from our standpoint is the very closest cooperation of the labor and Socialist movements of the Western hemisphere. Above all is it necessary for the labor and democratic forces in the USA to oppose every move of an imperialist character on the part of the United States. A democratic anti-Fascist dynamic demands the cession by the USA of all imperialistic privileges and controls in Latin America as well as elsewhere.

7 Danger of ‘Appeasement’

In American public life, reflecting certain sentiments in important big-business circles, there is beginning to arise a tendency that urges a policy of ‘appeasement’ towards a victorious Hitler, a policy of ‘playing ball’ with him

if, and when, he establishes himself as master of Europe. We must denounce and resist this tendency with all our power, for in effect it would mean direct American aid in bolstering and consolidating the Nazi domination of Europe, and would prove as fatal in its consequences as the Chamberlain-Daladier policy of 'appeasement' did in the years that led up to the war. On the contrary, American policy must be so directed as to prevent the resources of our country and the Western hemisphere from being used by Hitler in order to strengthen and perpetuate his regime in Europe. In this respect, the economic integration of the Western hemisphere along the lines of a self-sustaining economy of welfare, security, freedom and voluntary cooperation is of vital significance.

Nor should the danger be overlooked of an attitude of 'appeasement' to Stalin and the Russian dictatorship. To look upon Stalinist Russia as potentially a reliable ally against totalitarianism is not only in crass contradiction to the basic facts of the international situation but would also prove fatal to the development of a genuine democratic dynamic in the struggle against Hitler Germany.

8 Perspectives

All of the above proposals are part of a program of action within the framework of the existing system. But beyond this short-range program, there are the long-range perspectives generated out of the rock-bottom fact that whatever be the outcome of the war, short of the triumph of socialism, the fundamental crisis that brought about the war will not be solved; in fact, it will probably even be aggravated. Only the replacement of the entire system of capitalist imperialism by international cooperation on the basis of socialism can solve this deep-going, far-reaching crisis and provide mankind with the possibility of a future of peace, welfare and freedom. Only such a basic social transformation, moreover, can develop the democratic dynamic capable of coping with the forces of Fascism and totalitarianism. In the light of these broader perspectives:

1. It is imperative that every effort be made to develop and maintain international working-class contacts and international labor action during the war. Regardless of how feeble such connections are today, their potential import is immense. Independence of action and international solidarity are the supreme resources of labor and socialism.

2. We pledge every possible assistance to the underground opponents of Fascism in the Fascist and Fascist-conquered countries of Europe in their efforts to re-establish a *bona fide* labor movement and to destroy totalitarianism.

3. It is necessary for the international labor movement – or whatever is left of it – to prepare its own world-peace program. For such a peace program, labor in the United States and elsewhere, in whatever form it can do so, should work unflinchingly.

WHEN LOVESTONE LED THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES



© Corbis

William Z. Foster and Benjamin Gitlow, Communist candidates for President and Vice President. Madison Square Garden. 1928

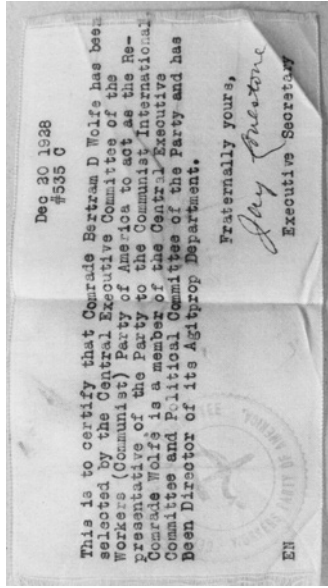


Communist rally fills New York's Madison Square Garden, 1928

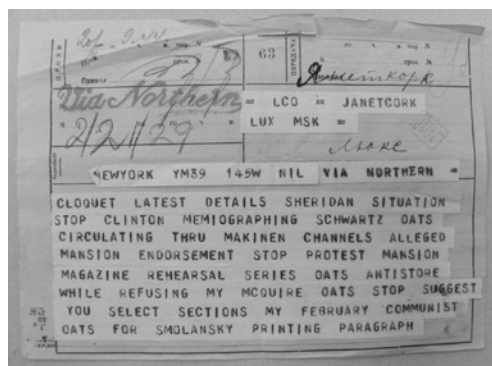


At left, 1928 U.S. Communist campaign button.

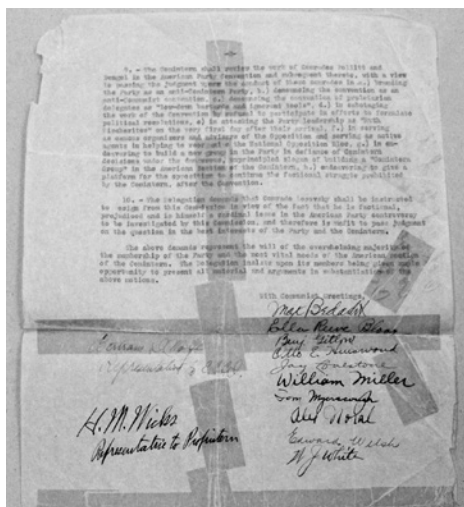
At right, silk credential signed by Jay Lovestone, indicating that Bertram D. Wolfe is the U.S. Party representative to the Communist International.



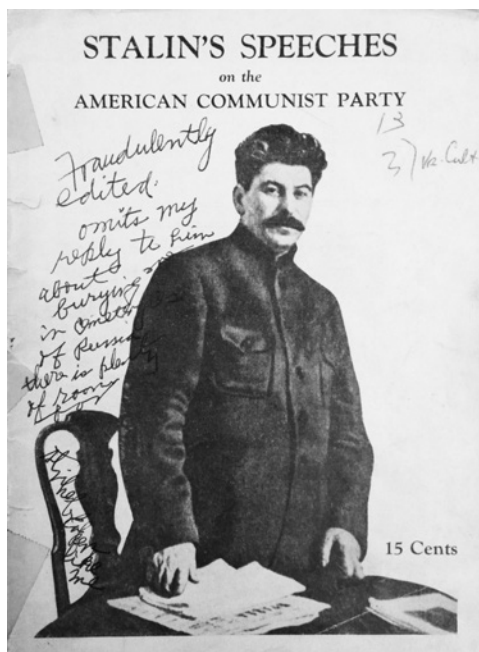
THE SPLIT FROM STALIN



A heavily coded cable from Bertram D. Wolfe to Lovestone, reporting on the increasingly gloomy situation for the Lovestone leadership developing within the higher circles of the Communist International.



This is the final page of 'Proposals of the delegation of the sixth National Convention', presented by the very substantial delegation sent by the Lovestone-led U.S. Communist Party to argue the case of the U.S. party before the Communist International. (In this volume, in the section entitled 'The Lovestone Split of 1929', it is, reproduced as document #1.) This remarkable document represented an effort to establish the relative autonomy of a 'national section' of the Communist International and (in some ways inadvertently) a direct challenge to the consolidation of Stalin's authority within the world Communist movement. When it became clear that the challenge would not be tolerated, a number of the signers – Max Bedacht, Ella Reeve Bloor, Otto Huiswoud, and H. M. Wicks – repudiated the document.

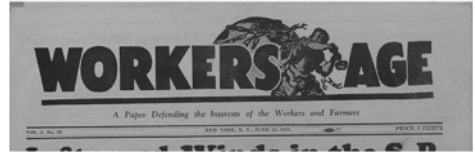


A 1930 pamphlet containing Stalin's Comintern speeches from 1929 on the U.S. Communist Party, demolishing the authority of the Lovestone leadership in the 'mainstream' of the Communist movement. Of interest are Lovestone's marginal comments: 'Fraudulently edited – omits my reply to him about burying me in cemetery of Russia [where] there is plenty of room for strike breakers like me'.

THE NEW GROUP



Lovestone group contingent – May Day parade, New York City, 1933



Mastheads of the Lovestone group's paper – 1929, 1931, 1934



Rally of the Lovestone group in support of the 1934 San Francisco general strike.



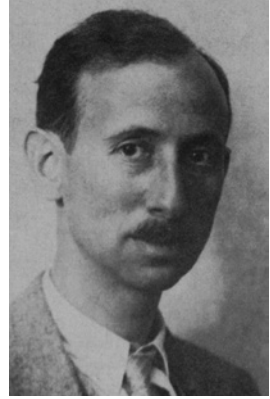
Dues stamps and logo for Lovestone group



Jay Lovestone



Ben Gitlow



Bertram Wolfe



Charles Zimmerman



Will Herberg



Edward Welsh



Ellen Dawson



Ella Wolfe



Ernest Calloway

COMMUNIST PARTY OPPOSITION IN ACTION



The hard-fought sit-down strike in Flint, Michigan of 1936–7 was a key to building the United Auto Workers union. Men and women associated with the Lovestone group were among the militants involved in this victorious struggle.



Lovestone speaking at rally of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, whose president David Dubinsky stands behind him. The Lovestone group had deep roots and significant influence in this union.

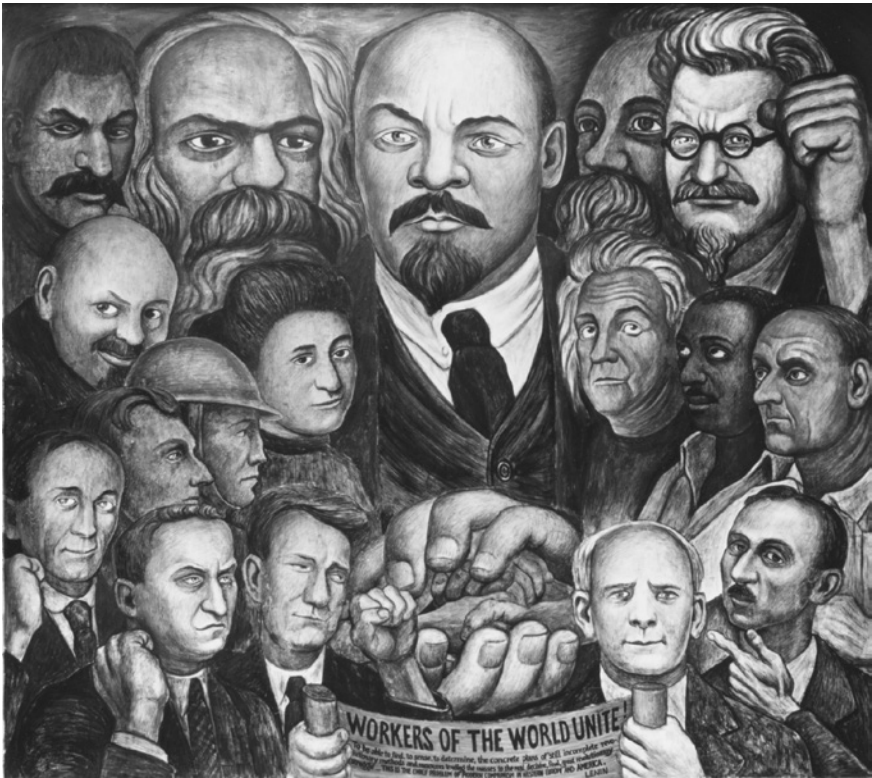


Solidarity meeting in defense of the revolutionary struggle during the Spanish Civil War (1936–9) – Lovestone standing, Wolfe seated at right.



The Lovestone group was especially supportive of the left-wing Party of Marxist Workers Unity (POUM) during the Spanish Civil War.

PROLETARIAN UNITY



A 1933 panel from Diego Rivera's mural series for the Lovestone group's New Workers School. It reflects aspects of the group's orientation in the early '30s, favoring the unity of Communist forces. Top row: Stalin, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky. Under Stalin is Bukharin. On either side of Lenin are Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin. A farmer and solidier on the left join hands with a black worker (Edward Welsh) and a white worker on the right, claspng hands that are bound together in Lenin's hands. In the foreground are Communist leasers, from left to right: William Z. Foster, Jay Lovestone, Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon, the late Charles Ruthenberg, and Bertram D. Wolfe.



Group shot of members of the Communist Party Opposition at the New Workers' School in the early 1930s, in front of a portion of the Diego Rivera mural history of the United States. Standing second from left is Jay Lovestone. Seated on the floor second from left is Bertram D. Wolfe and second from right is Edward Welsh. [Permission from Tamiment Library collection, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University]

INDEPENDENT LABOR LEAGUE OF AMERICA



Above: Bertram D. Wolfe speaking at convention of the ILLA,

Right: Delegates at ILLA convention at the headquarters and forum hall of the Lovestone group.

APPLICATION CARD

INDEPENDENT LABOR LEAGUE OF AMERICA

I, the undersigned, hereby apply for membership in the Independent Labor League of America. I pledge to help develop a powerful, class-conscious labor movement in the United States and in the world as a whole. I pledge to help in the struggle for the abolition of capitalism and for the establishment of a socialist society in this country and throughout the world.

Date of Init.	NAME..... <i>Nutale R. Dams</i>	ADDRESS..... <i>17 Commerce Street</i>	BRANCH.....
Date Rec'd.....	RECOMMENDED BY.....	APPROVED BY.....	Branch Secretary.....
Ledger No.....	DATE..... <i>January 3, 1940</i>		
Branch.....	N. B. An initiation fee of 50c. for employed applicant and 10c. for unemployed, must accompany this application card.		

Application card for membership in ILLA.



Social Struggles in the United States

Editors' note: No less important than considering their various and shifting perspectives on international affairs in evaluating the Lovestone group is an exploration of what its members did 'on the ground' in the country where they actually lived. The size of the Lovestone group has been estimated as varying between three hundred and fifty and two thousand. In an interview with historian Robert J. Alexander, Will Herberg estimated that, at its high point, the group had been between one-thousand and fifteen-hundred members strong,¹ while Bertram Wolfe claimed that it probably never had more than five hundred activists² – though if one distinguishes between active and inactive members, both could be right. Nonetheless, a number of these activists played important roles in the course of the 1930s in various social struggles in the United States.

Early Struggles (Items One–Five)

The first five items here reflect the early struggles of the group, as its activists sought to maintain their activities, and define their politics, amid the fierce hostility of former comrades within the organisations and movements that they had been helping to build. The basic orientation of the group within the labour movement is capably defined in Ben Gitlow's critical discussion of the National Convention of the American Federation of Labor. Scottish immigrant Ellen Dawson, a leader of the Communist-initiated National Textile Workers Union, offers a vivid and thoughtful report on the legendary Gastonia strike which she helped to lead in North Carolina, with only a veiled reference to the developing Communist Party sectarianism – but her next report, not reproduced here,³ would give a bitter account akin to those by Charles Zimmerman of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, and Edward Welsh of the Harlem Tenants Council, describing mainstream Communist stalwarts destructively focusing on marginalising the Lovestoneite 'renegades' to the detriment of working-class organisations and struggles. A similar story comes

1 Alexander 1981, p. 30.

2 Wolfe 1981, p. 563.

3 'The Convention of the Textile Workers', *Revolutionary Age*, 15 July 1930.

through in Harry Connor's report on the Unemployed Council in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Race and Racism (Items Six–Ten)

Lovestoneite contributions in the anti-racist struggle have received little attention in the past, but given the importance of such former Lovestoneites as Pauli Murray, Ella Baker and Ernest Calloway in civil-rights struggles from the 1940s through the 1960s, this is a gap in the scholarship that certainly deserves to be filled. Grace Lamb, who had been one of the foremost black women leaders in the Communist Party, and a central leader of the Harlem Tenants Council, offers, in 'The church vs. the Negro', a scathing and unrelenting historical critique of organised Christianity's role in the enslavement and ongoing oppression of African Americans. There are echoes of these points in a similarly scathing and unrelenting set of articles by Edward Welsh on the Communist-initiated National Negro Congress – denouncing the influence of black churches and businesses, and the weakness of trade union and radical labour in the new organisation.⁴ Welsh's orientation also reflects themes in a major document produced by the Communist Party Opposition on 'Marxism and the "Negro question"', which rejects black nationalism and the notion of national self-determination for African Americans, particularly the Communist Party's early 1930s argument for a 'black-belt nation' in the South. It argues instead that black Americans represent an oppressed caste, and that the working-class majority among African Americans must join with white workers to struggle for racial and economic justice. Informative articles by Lyman Fraser and Ernest Calloway also advance this perspective.

Trade-Union Movement (Items 11–16)

The centrality of the labour movement, particularly the trade unions, to the Lovestone group, is emphasised in key documents – particularly a section on 'Problems and Tasks' presented here from Jay Lovestone's key pamphlet,

4 A far more positive report by a left-wing academic can be found in a report by the well-known African American intellectual Ralph J. Bunche (Bunche 1936), while a critique similar to Welsh's is offered by George Streater, former editor of the NAACP's *Crisis* and organizer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (Streater 1936), both of which appeared in the Lovestoneite-influenced periodical *Race*. Also see Gilmore 2008, pp. 307–16.

The American Labor Movement: Its Past, Present and Future (Lovestone 1932). Lovestoneite rejection of the Communist Party's 'revolutionary' dual-union orientation of the late 1920s and early 1930s, and its insistence on the need to work within existing unions, at that time dominated by the American Federation of Labor (AFL), was reflected in Charles Zimmerman's decision to return to the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), where his organising skills enabled him to build a powerful base that resulted in his becoming a major force in the union. This, in turn, enabled him to secure the agreement of ILGWU President David Dubinsky to have Lovestone address the union's Convention, reproduced here. Zimmerman himself, when he hailed the 1934 San Francisco general strike and called for militant industrial unionism as an alternative to the craft-union approach dominating the AFL, sparked an angry attack from AFL President William Green – the result being the remarkable pamphlet reproduced here, *American Labor Faces the Future*. Zimmerman, in line with ILGWU President David Dubinsky, was fully supportive of the Committee (later Congress) of Industrial Organizations, the CIO, a broad, radical federation of industrial unions which crystallised within, and then broke from, the AFL – reflected in his 'Hope of trade-union movement', which was the perspective of the Lovestone group as a whole, indicated in Will Herberg's 'The CIO and the Problem of Unity'. By the decade's end, however, the Lovestoneites had lost a major factional battle in one of the key CIO unions, the influence of the mainstream Communist Party had grown, and the AFL leadership had become more open to the idea of industrial unionism – causing the Lovestone group, along with its ally David Dubinsky, to shift in favour of genuine AFL-CIO unity, with the ILGWU ultimately leaving the CIO and – after a moment of independence while still calling for such unity – returning to the AFL fold. This is reflected in Zimmerman's 'Call for Labor Unity Against Reaction', first as an address over a radical radio station in New York, WEVD, then published in his union newspaper and in the Lovestoneite publication.

United Auto Workers (Items 17–21)

The Lovestone group played a central role in the formation of one of the new CIO unions, the United Automobile Workers (UAW), and for a brief moment – as the key advisors and union staff members around the organisation's first President, Homer Martin – it seemed that they were more or less in the leadership of this dynamic new organisation. It can be argued, however, that much of their initial credibility arose from the roles that members of the group played in the militant struggles that put the UAW on the map. This comes through in

articles by an anonymous Lovestoneite worker, 'Flint Striker Tells Story of GM Violence', and Stuart Meffron, 'The Battle of Flint', and by two women activists using obvious pseudonyms, 'Minute Women of the Union – the Emergency Brigade' and 'Design for Living During an Auto Workers' Sit-Down Strike'. Lovestone himself offered more than one piece of theory and analysis, such as 'Implications of the Sit-Down'. But the rosy situation soon fell apart. It could be argued that Lovestoneite factional overreach combined with President Martin's somewhat erratic behaviour in generating a coalition of other forces – Communists, Socialists, Trotskyists and others – to wage a war within the UAW to save the organisation, a version of events that is put forward by many participants and historians. In his bitterly anti-Communist report, 'Latest Stalinist Assault Upon Auto Union', Lovestone tells a different story, advanced as well by labour reporter Ben Stolberg in his influential book, *The Story of the CIO*.⁵ The perspectives developed here – also profoundly influenced by the dramatic shift in the Lovestone group's late 1930s perception of the Soviet Union and the world-Communist movement under Stalin – contributed to the sustained assault against, and destruction of, alleged 'Communist influence' in US trade unions in the late 1940s and early 1950s, which helped set the stage in 1955 for the AFL-CIO unity of which the Lovestone group had become a strong advocate by the end of the 1930s.

Regarding Others on the Left (Items 22–5)

In much of the material in other sections of this volume, we can see that the Lovestone group was inclined to view others on the US Left quite negatively. A partial exception to this in the first half of the 1930s, despite very sharp tactical criticisms, was the Communist movement as led by Joseph Stalin. A defining element of Lovestoneite ideology was a fierce critique of Stalin's revolutionary opponent, Leon Trotsky – initially taking the form of defending Stalin's orientation against that of Trotsky. Ten full pages of Bertram Wolfe's *What Is the Communist Opposition?*⁶ consists of an appendix providing such a polemic, 'Trotsky and Trotskyism', reproduced here. The succinct critique of the Communist Party's ultra-left sectarianism, voiced by former member Dorothy Dare in 'Joining the CPO', typically calls for Communist unity around a reformed programme along Lovestoneite lines. Of course, the Lovestone group joined with other left-wing organisations in united fronts around various

⁵ Stolberg 1938, pp. 131–4, 156–86.

⁶ Wolfe 1933.

issues – such as marching in solidarity with the international workers' holiday on 1 May – although Edward Welsh's May Day speech reproduced here, suggesting a revolutionary alternative to the Stalinists' people's front orientation of the late 1930s, caused consternation among Communist Party representatives. The final item in this section is Bernard Herman's three-part review of Ben Gitlow's anti-Communist memoir, *I Confess*. Gitlow's resignation from the Lovestone Group in early 1933, subsequent efforts to forge unity with Socialists and Trotskyists and bitter disillusionment with Communism as such are treated with derision. Also, while the review seems to make thoughtful criticisms of Gitlow's book, other accounts of Gitlow's departure from the Lovestoneites indicate that the reviewer glosses over some of the issues involved.⁷ Particularly significant, the review indicates that, as late as 1940, the Lovestone group continued, for the most part, to view the early years of the Communist movement positively, and also to be quite dismissive of other currents on the Left.



7 Alexander 1981, pp. 64–7 and Wolfe 1981, pp. 568–71. Gitlow was inclined, in later years, to go much further to the political Right than his former comrades, associating himself with Reverend Billy James Hargis's Christian Anti-Communist Crusade and with the far-right John Birch Society.

Early Struggles



1. The AF of L Convention and the Left Wing⁸

Ben Gitlow

The Jubilee Convention of the American Federation of Labor will open in Boston on 6 October 1930. It will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the organization. The event is bound to be of great importance, especially from an historical point of view.

In the course of fifty years, the organization has gone through many changes. It has now left behind its early history of struggle and organization. As a logical result of the policies of its reactionary officialdom it has become the seat of reaction within the labor movement.

The development of American imperialism – particularly in the post-war period – has brought about many changes in the organization. Precisely because the AF of L has been an organization largely of skilled workers has it so easily fallen under the influence of US imperialism. The fabulous super-profits of American imperialism made it possible for the capitalists to favor some sections of the skilled workers and to widen the chasm between the millions of unskilled and semi-skilled who comprise the large army of the unorganized in most of the basic and strategic industries in the United States. In this process the hegemony of American capitalism over the labor bureaucracy became practically complete. The labor officialdom, by and large, has come into the fold of American imperialism. The Greens and the Wolls are the direct agents of imperialism in the labor movement, doing the bidding of Wall Street at beck and call.

• • •

The AF of L Convention takes place at a time when the country is in the throes of a very severe economic crisis. The economic crisis has blasted the hollow contentions of American capitalism that it has solved the question of economic crisis and, as Hoover so glibly put it, can ensure permanent prosperity.

8 *Revolutionary Age*, 1 October 1930, p. 6.

It has blasted the new 'wage theories' of the AF of L bureaucracy that mass production plus high wages are the foundation of American prosperity. It has exploded the myth that mass production and the Ford plan, with its speedup and efficiency labor-saving methods guarantee a good living to the American workers for all time to come. The membership of the AF of L has been very badly hit by the crisis. Unemployment has reached unprecedented heights, wages are being cut, unions are being smashed. With about six million unemployed, with a technological unemployment of over one million driven out of industry by rationalization, with part-time employment and 'vacation without pay' becoming a more and more prominent feature of American industrial life, with wage-cutting, the order of the day and capitalist reaction growing day by day, the bureaucracy of the AF of L will find it very difficult, at the Jubilee Convention, to put conviction into their praises of the rule of American capital, of the policies of collaboration and cooperation with the capitalists. In the light of the prevailing conditions as they affect the workers, including the workers in the AF of L, the support of the officialdom for rationalization and for the Hoover economic program will lack positiveness and power to deceive that it had in the period of so-called prosperity.

...

The appearance of Herbert Hoover at the Convention will be of great importance. He came to greet the Convention in the name of American capital and to enlist the support of the AF of L for the foreign and domestic policies of US imperialism. Through Hoover's appearance, the Hoover-Green 'no-strike' pact will receive the official sanction of the AF of L through the Convention. Thus the stamp of approval will be given to the wage cuts, increased speed-up, union-smashing reaction.

In the face of acute unemployment and with no prospects of immediate relief, William Green, president of the AF of L, opposing any sort of unemployment insurance, is a very fitting prelude to the Jubilee Convention and to Hoover's appearance as a spokesman at a labor gathering. More than anything else, this stand of Green's exposes the anti-labor character of the reigning bureaucracy of the AF of L.

...

The discontent and unrest among the three million members of the AF of L is growing by leaps and bounds. If it reacted to the prevailing situation and to the conditions of its membership as a labor organization should, the AF of L

Convention would present no such picture. The bureaucracy will meet complacently and speak on behalf, and in the name of, labor without fear of contradiction or opposition. Within the AF of L there is practically no organized left wing or opposition to the reactionary bureaucracy – and this at a time when there exists so much discontent with things as they are and with the course of the bureaucracy. The once powerful left wing has been liquidated by the policies of [the] Trade Union Unity League which, well over a year ago, abandoned left-wing activity within the AF of L unions and adopted the De Leonist policy of building new unions and deserting the millions of organized workers.

The consideration of the AF of L membership as a reactionary mass and of work in the AF of L as useless is based on the premise that American imperialism is in a position to keep satisfied the three million members of the conservative unions. Such a conception is the very reverse of the truth, especially today, and every development in the labor movement shows this.

What the TUUL has destroyed must be built up again. A sharp turn must be made in policy if a militant rank-and-file opposition is to be developed once more at a time when there is more need than ever for such an opposition movement. The best way to greet the AF of L Convention is to raise the cry: *'Back to the AF of L and the existing unions!' 'Organize a rank-and-file movement to oust the reactionary officialdom, to fight for a militant program against class collaboration, and to make the existing unions militant organizations of the workers!'*

On what program shall all progressive and militant trade-union forces be united? On the following immediate program:

1. For unemployment insurance!
2. Against wage-cuts!
3. Against the class collaboration policies of the reactionary officialdom!
4. For amalgamation of the craft unions into industrial unions!
5. Against the so-called 'non-partisan' policy of the AF of L in political action! For a Labor Party!
6. For the organization of the unorganized!
7. Against militarism, imperialism and the danger of war!
8. For the recognition of the Soviet Union!

The Jubilee Convention of the AF of L will play a truly significant and historical role if the danger of its reactionary, pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist course will serve to arouse and to bring together all those forces of opposition working for the rebirth of a powerful left-wing opposition movement in the American labor unions!

2. Gastonia⁹

Ellen Dawson

In the most important Southern states there is now going on an extensive process of industrialization. It is not only that textile factories are being built on a large scale; the greatest evidence of the trend of industrialization is to be seen in the establishment of steel mills, in the development of the coal industry, in the growth of oil-production, in the rise of chemical plants, in the tremendous development of power-resources and – above all, in the organization of industries producing the means of production.

We see here the birth of the Southern working class as a class – the growth of consciousness on the part of even the most backward workers that their immediate everyday interests clash with the interests of their employers.

Here, class struggles are being fought with an intense elemental bitterness. Here there are pitted against the employers, not ‘hunkeys’ or ‘dagoes’ – not foreign-born workers – but the ‘purest of the pure’ Anglo-Saxons in the United States as well as the other kind of the much oppressed 100-percent American – the Negro. Naturally it is not only the Southern working class that is being born. The same process gives rise to a conscious Southern industrial bourgeoisie, free from feudal traditions, illusions and hindrances, and all that goes to make up the traditions of ‘dear old Dixie’. These ‘new’ capitalists have the cunning and brutality of their kind; they are tied up very closely with the biggest financial interests of the North.

Of course, no one should mechanically compare the present situation in the South with the situation in Northern states during their periods of industrialization. There are many features that are similar and there are many valuable lessons to be learned. These we cannot deny or overlook. But there are important *new* features in the situation. In the first place, the struggles in the period of industrialization of the South are taking place in an entirely different world situation, in the conditions of post-war imperialism, that is, on the whole, a dying, declining imperialism. Secondly, we have today a Communist Party, a

9 *Revolutionary Age*, 21 November 1929, pp. 3–4.

conscious revolutionary force already on the scene and which will be increasingly upon the scene. Third, the development of the South does not take place through the establishment of small factories, then larger ones, etc., but tremendous factories with the most modern equipment are installed immediately. Finally, we have in the field a new type of union, a class-industrial union, the National Textile Workers Union. All of these factors indicate the new situation.

It would be entirely wrong to say that the crisis in the Southern textile industry arises merely out of the competition of the Northern textile-operators. The textile-industry is in crisis on a world scale primarily because it has failed to keep pace with the advancement of technical progress, with the development of rationalization in other industries like chemicals, steel, the railways etc. As a result there is a feverish introduction of rationalization-schemes, such as the 'stretch-out', which constitutes the big factor in hastening the class awakening of the workers in the Southern textile-industry.

Gastonia marks an historical stage in the awakening of class consciousness among the 'most' American workers in this country. It is an inspiring symbol of the new reserves that the older sections of the proletarian army in the USA are winning for the class war against the capitalist exploiters.

The workers in Gastonia are not yet revolutionists. They are not yet revolutionists in any form or manner. Neither here nor anywhere else in the South are they supporters of the Communist program of the overthrow of capitalism and the proletarian dictatorship. The textile workers of Gastonia, like the other workers in the South, are fighting for the most elementary, the most vital needs and interests that affect their lives day in and day out. Yet the strikes in the South necessarily take on a political character because of the active strike-breaking, scab-shielding, union-smashing role of the government, because even the smallest and simplest struggle becomes a struggle against the government forces.

What the Southern workers need most is clear, conscious, militant, energetic, honest leadership. In Gastonia and elsewhere, such leadership has fortunately been provided by the National Textile Workers Union – a left-wing union founded upon the principles of the class struggle. The National Textile Workers Union is still very young and weak; yet through its fine work in the South it has already gained great influence and prestige. The National Textile Workers Union in the South – like the new Southern proletariat – is being born in a welter of blood; kidnapping, slugging, lynching threats, the murder of Ella May Wiggins, the raiding of the union headquarters, the attempt to railroad the best militants to the electric chair – all this will not check the National Textile Workers Union in its drive to organize the Southern textile workers. It is precisely here that the new class union stands out in sharp contrast to the

UTW and the AF of L bureaucracies which in the South, as everywhere else, are serving openly and shamelessly as the 'labor' agency of the bosses, the open-shoppers and the strike-breakers.

The rising capitalist class of the South is flushed with pride at the tremendous headway it has been making in industrializing its territory. They are pointing with gratification to the South as 'the natural home of the open shop'. They speak with terrible conceit of their 'achievements' in setting up new factories, in building new machine-producing plants, in constructing highways.

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Obviously the Southern capitalists are greedy for profits. The possibilities for industrial development, that is, big profits, because of the great natural resources, have only sharpened their appetite. That is why the *Nashville Banner*, in discussing the situation in North Carolina, said in a rage: 'North Carolina manifestly waited too long to check the Communist invasion. Its coming and intent were concealed from the time that New England Communist leaders put in their appearance at Gastonia six months ago'.

What the bosses are after is to make an example of the militants, to send them to the electric chair or to send them to jail for years and to terrorise the masses and really break all efforts at organization.

We can expect the most brutal suppression of the workers in the South just as soon as they raise even the faintest voice of protest. What I have experienced in Gastonia is sufficient proof of this. Attacks will be made upon the workers who dare show any resistance to the stretch-out system, no matter if the workers are Communists, Republicans or rock-ribbed Democrats. But as everywhere else this will be in vain. The rapid development of capitalist industry on such a large scale itself provides the economic basis for the building of mass organizations of the workers.

Huge class battles are in the making in the South. Whether Communists or not, the workers will use arms as well as mass demonstrations in resisting capitalist rationalization. Thus, in Marion, where Communists did not give leadership and where the AF of L gave misleadership, there have recently taken place armed clashes. In the South, the use of arms is neither a novelty nor a sign of revolutionary struggle. This is another feature that will distinguish the Southern class struggle from the Northern. We must not lose our balance because the Southern class struggle there appears from time to time 'strange' and apparently contradictory features – if we come with a blue-print approach.

How symbolic was the funeral in Marion a few days ago where religious hymns were sung along with trade-union songs!

Let no one make the mistake that the class struggle in the South is limited to the textile industry. Even bigger, sharper and more bitter class battles are coming very soon in the coal and oil fields, in the iron foundries, in the steel mills, in huge power plants. New regiments of the American working class are forming – vigorous, energetic, militant.

What shall we do? With proper tactics we Communists have a big field here. Its significance cannot be exaggerated. In the South especially it is necessary that the campaigns we wage be on the broadest class basis and not on any *narrow* and *sectarian* line. In this way we will be able to win the confidence of the workers and be in a position to deepen and give political character to their struggles, to make these backward workers of yesterday the militant fighters of today and the conscious revolutionists of tomorrow.

We must be extremely careful never to do anything which will lay us open to the charge of having interests other than and different from those of the workers themselves. We must lay the greatest stress on developing good local leadership, good Communist leadership among the 100-percent American Southern workers.

The Negro question plays a decisive role in the South. On this we can make no concessions of compromise. We use every occasion to convince the Southern workers of the correctness of our program of complete social, political and racial equality. It is true that in the beginning our uncompromising attitude may slow down our progress, but it cannot be too much emphasised that the road to victory in the South lies in our ability to destroy the dangerous weapon of race-hostility so carefully cultivated and so effectively used by the bosses. We are convinced that our propaganda, tied up with the experiences of the actual struggle, will weld together the solidarity of the Negro and white workers in a united fight against the bosses and the strike-breaking government.

It is true that, for obvious reasons, the Southern workers are, much less than the Northern, under the influence of the poison of the AF of L bureaucracy. Yet the attempts of the reactionary AF of L fakers and their Socialist partners to 'bring peace' to the South are a serious danger to the Southern workers. The recent announcement of the Executive Council of the AF of L that it will raise a million dollars for 'organizing' the South is really a notice that a monstrous move is being planned to paralyse all attempts at genuine working-class organization and struggle.

Our entire work concentrates upon building up the National Textile Workers Union upon a broad basis. The NTWU is not and must not be a department of the Communist Party. It is not and must not be a Communist union. The

acceptance of the proletarian dictatorship is no prerequisite for membership. It must be open to all workers in the mills who are ready to struggle for a union, for higher wages, for better conditions, for better living standards, no matter what their other beliefs may be.

The lessons of Gastonia must be brought home not only to all Communists but to all workers in this country. Around the issue of Gastonia and the defense of the framed-up militants must be mobilised a broad united front of workers all over the country, on an even bigger scale than was done in the Passaic and New Bedford situations. What we do now will have great influence upon the future of the class struggle in the South. It is our responsibility and our task.

3. Second Convention of the Needle Trades Union¹⁰

Charles S. Zimmerman

The second Convention of our union met at a most critical moment. The entire industry is undergoing deep changes.

It is many years since such degrading conditions have been forced upon the needle-trades workers. In the ranks of the workers there is developing tremendous discontent. Fully aware of this situation, the reactionary bureaucrats and the government are working more feverishly and more cunningly than ever to fool the workers, to serve the bosses and to hold back the tides of revolt.

Under these decisive conditions the historic mission of our second Convention could only be: to examine carefully the whole situation; work out those policies and tactics which would unite our ranks; arouse and mobilise the needle-workers for militant struggle in defense of their most pressing needs under the inspiration and banner of the NTWIU; organize the hundreds of thousands of totally unorganized; and to destroy the reactionary bureaucracy by winning away the masses from them.

Unfortunately, our second National Convention failed miserably to help achieve any of these goals. Instead of unifying our ranks, the Convention initiated a new campaign of slander and abuse against some of the most active workers of our union. Instead of providing correct policies for which there is such a crying need, the second Convention sharply extended the wrong line which has already brought so much confusion and ruin to our union.

The Background of the Convention

In order to understand what really happened, it is necessary to have a picture of certain events leading up to the Convention.

10 *Revolutionary Age*, 1 November 1929, pp. 13–14.

At its last Convention (Cleveland, September 1929) the TUUL [Trade Union Unity League], with which our union is affiliated, adopted a basic change in the entire program and policies of the left-wing movement in the trade unions. The new line substituted empty, so-called revolutionary catch-phrases for the everyday struggles.

Soon our union was artificially and mechanically drawn into the serious crisis in which the CPUSA (under whose leadership the TUUL is working) found itself as a result of the fundamental change of program and leadership.

Then, the official leadership of our union turned its major attention from constructive union activities to a campaign of destructive factional maneuvers, vilification and elimination, thus narrowing down our union into a helpless sect.

Naturally, under such conditions, our union, in recent months, failed to carry on any organization drives, thus failing to maintain and broaden the base of our union and thereby neglecting to defend and improve the conditions of the workers in the shops.

The Preparations for the Convention

During the period before the Convention, there was no real discussion of the problems and issues facing our union. Slander displaced analysis. No genuine self-criticism was tolerated. Though the new line had already been in force for more than nine months, no attempt was made to examine critically how it has worked in practice and what results it has brought to our union. To cover up the ruinous course of the new line, its falsities were hushed and fake issues were raised. In order to hide the bankruptcy of the new line and to shift the blame of its tragic failures, the official leadership even went so far as to repeat the ridiculous slimy attacks of the *Forward*, Green, Woll, McGrady and Company against the left-wing movement in the needle-trades. (Johnstone statement in *Daily Worker* and *Freiheit* of 7 May and the resolution endorsing this statement as adopted by the Shop Delegates Council of 15 May.)

The official leadership of our union made no earnest effort to arrange a discussion in the shops – even of the false issues they manufactured. A pretence at discussion was made only in those shops where the official leadership resorted to all sorts of maneuvers in order to eliminate and make impossible the election of workers who opposed, criticised or even questioned the false new line. An especially active figure in this campaign was the National Secretary of our union.

Finally, in the election of Convention delegates, there was altogether too much disregard even of the basis adopted by the General Executive Board.

Typical cases of this looseness and irresponsibility in the manner of electing the Convention delegates are the following: in Philadelphia, about three hundred members were gotten to elect 48 delegates, despite the fact that the official basis of representation was one delegate for the first 10 members and an additional delegate for every 25 members thereafter. In certain cases, delegates were elected for shops where our union had no roots. On the other hand, in one case in New York City, all sorts of maneuvers were resorted to by the official leadership in order to prevent a shop of over sixty workers from electing a delegation because it was known that the workers would most likely choose as their representatives opponents of the false line.

The leadership of our union went to all these lengths merely to drum up, to create artificially, a mass Convention which would put the seal of approval on the wrong new line and costly mistakes of the recent months. But all the boasting and boosting were of no use. Long in advance of the Convention, the official leadership advertised that there would be at least nine hundred delegates at the Convention. But the maximum total vote at the Convention at no time reached even 300, although the credentials committee reported 415.

Bluff, self-deception, an absence of constructive criticism and cheap maneuvers characterised the official preparations for the Convention.

The Conduct of the Convention

Fully in line with what preceded it, the Convention was so organized as to put a rubber-stamp of approval on the official leadership and the false new line.

The Convention was allowed to elect only one committee – the Presidium – officially called the Convention Committee. This committee assumed full power to propose the personnel of all the committees.

Not a single delegate who was opposed to or had a critical attitude towards the new line was placed on any of the Convention committees. This showed clearly that the leadership was against any adequate consideration of the problems facing our union. So high-handed was this procedure that delegate Berlin – who disagreed with the program as proposed by the minority – withdrew from the Resolutions Committee as a protest against the treatment accorded the minority of the Convention. The whole atmosphere of the Convention was one which was made against an honest, frank and free discussion of the urgent tasks facing our union. Instead, the stage was all set for misrepresenting and prejudicing the position of the minority and thus obscuring the real issues.

It was only through the ruling laid down by comrade Hyman, who at this point took over the chair from the embarrassed delegate Cohen, that we were able even to present our program to the Convention. To deny us this elementary right would be already too much to swallow for comrade Hyman.

Throughout the Convention, the majority of the official leadership of the union – that is, neither Hyman nor Borovich, neither Portnoy nor Wortis – participated in the discussion of the program presented. Why?... On the other hand, the leading spirit and moving hand of the Convention was Jack Johnstone, who was somewhat assisted by Potash and Gold.

Issues at the Convention

As we have previously pointed out, the tasks of this organization were: to analyse the changing conditions of the industry, to examine the intolerable conditions forced upon the workers, to make a critical estimate of achievements and mistakes since the previous Convention, and finally to outline and decide upon a policy for building our union.

In the light of these tasks, the Convention flatly refused to meet the basic issues. We emphasised this at the Convention. Today, under the lash of our criticism and pressure, even John Schmies, Assistant National Secretary of the TUUL, is compelled to admit it:

The needle trades convention which we have just experienced is the best example of this condition. The preparation on the part of our Party comrades for this National Convention was a scandal and was a good example of how not to apply our Party trade union policy in the unions. Instead of organizing the Party fractions in order to really build up the convention politically and to present the TUUL program in a conscious militant fashion, giving to the workers in the needle trades industry and to the delegates at the convention a militant program for struggle, almost no preparations were made, the program presented to the convention lacking the most fundamental issues of the struggle.¹¹

The program presented by Gold was a hodge-podge, a confusion of opportunism and defeatism hiding behind a mess of meaningless, 'revolutionary'

11 *Daily Worker*, 14 June 1930.

sounding phrases. The policy it proposes leads away from the struggle, plays into the hands of the reactionary bureaucracy and leads to the liquidation and destruction of our union. Its most serious shortcomings are:

1. It presents a false and confused analysis and estimate of the recent economic developments and the present situation in the needle-trades industry.

2. It utterly fails to present an economic program outlining demands to meet the immediate conditions in which the needle-trades workers find themselves.

3. It presents an utterly false attitude towards, and estimate of, the reactionary unions. It fails to draw a line of distinction between the black, corrupt officialdom serving as agents of the bosses in the reactionary unions and the thousands of workers who are today in these organizations. The program fails to lay down a policy for winning these workers for the NTWIU but instead leaves them to the mercy of the reactionary bureaucrats trying to force company-union policies upon the workers.

4. The program shows complete bankruptcy in the question of strike strategy. Actually, the program does not say a word about strike strategy for a revolutionary union like ours. And this all-important question of strike strategy is decisive in the building up of our union and in the organization of the unorganized.

5. The program proposes a denial of trade-union democracy and the narrowing down of the base of our union so that it would become an impotent sect. This program perverts the true role of the shop delegates system and democratic centralism as a means of activating and increasing the responsibility and authority of the rank-and-file of our membership.

6. It makes a hollow mockery of the principle of self-criticism.

On the other hand, the keynote of the program we presented at the Convention is: *'The chief task of the Convention is to adopt such policies and tactics as will build our union of the needle-workers'.*

We emphatically repudiate the slanderous charge that our proposal is to back to the reactionary unions and to give up our union. Our line proposes the very opposite. We presented a clear program for building and strengthening our union and for winning, for the NTWIU, the many thousands of workers now in the reactionary unions. The main features of our program are:

1. An accurate estimate of the situation in the industry.

2. An analysis of the conditions of the workers.

3. A critical review of the activities, mistakes and shortcomings of our union since the last Convention.

4. An estimate of the reactionary unions and a line of tactics and policies for winning away the workers from these organizations and bringing them under the leadership and into the ranks of the NTWIU.

5. An estimate of the reactionary unions and a line of tactics and policies for winning away the workers from these organizations and bringing them under the leadership, and into the ranks, of the NTWIU.

6. A complete economic program for overcoming the immediate intolerable conditions in which the needle-trades workers find themselves.

7. A detailed plan of revolutionary strike strategy.

8. A plan for restoring democracy in our union, establishing a genuine shop delegates system and strengthening the apparatus of our union.

9. A thorough examination of the main features of the false line of the official leadership of our union.

Our program concludes with the following vigorous declaration of policy:

We have actively participated in the founding and building of our industrial union. Today we are fighting to save and build our union. We are for militant action instead of loud phrases. We are for the sharpest struggle against the corrupt trade union bureaucracy instead of running away from this fight under the cover of pseudo-revolutionary phrases.

Our comrades could not be provoked into a contest of slander. We did not enter into fights over petty matters. Under great difficulties and despite the smallness of our numbers, we laid down a clear line of policy and placed the important issues squarely and sharply before the Convention.

The new constitution and the new General Executive Board are in the main fully in accord with the spirit which prevailed at the Convention. The minority was not given any representation at all on the new General Executive Board, which consists of 47 members.

Forward to Building the NTWIU!

Our union finds itself in a very critical condition today, though the opportunities for building and strengthening our ranks are splendid. What our union needs most today is a correct policy. We urgently call upon all members of our union and all workers in the industry to examine the facts calmly and carefully, to study both programs, to discuss these programs in the shops, to think for themselves and then to arrive at their own conclusions.

Every honest worker will take the ridiculous accusations against us with a grain of salt. We are sure that, after a critical examination of the facts by the workers, by the rank and file, the present dangerously wrong line will be rejected and the correct program which we propose will be adopted. Then we will be able to go forward to build our union, the NTWIU, into a mighty, militant industrial union of the needle-trades workers.

4. The Communists and the Unemployed Council¹²

Harry H. Connor (Fort Wayne, Ind., 1932)

When a searchlight is thrown on the activities of the Communists in the jobless movement in Fort Wayne, a picture is shown that is interesting but to which little attention has been paid in the Communist press. It may be true that the main task of Communists today is to gain a foothold in the large industrial centers. Yet, it should not be overlooked that it is also important to build a network of organizations all over the country. It is important to establish our movement in small centers that are closely in touch with the countryside and from there penetrate into the real rustic communities.

In many European countries, notably Finland, we see the disastrous results of 'red' cities and reactionary countrysides. And that should be avoided in the USA, even if agriculture plays a less major part in the economic life of the country. For that kind of work, for the establishment of Communist groups in small towns, where the majority of the population has recently come from the farms, where there are no radical traditions but strong religious sentiments, and firm belief in 'old glory' and the 'land of the free', for such work, the experiences in Fort Wayne are valuable indeed.

Further, we can also see a picture of the Party in action. We shall see what the sectarian course of the three last years has done, what results the 'enlightenment campaign' has accomplished. We shall see how difficult it will be to get away from the inheritance of these three years of ultra-leftism, may the Party leaders ever so much call for 'new turns', may they even repudiate the whole course and admit that they were wrong. Many members will no doubt prefer to drop out, rather than give up the golden dreams of revolution right round the corner.

12 *Workers Age*, 1 November 1932, p. 5.

Sectarianism Defeated

When the unemployed movement started, there were representatives of the Communist Party as well as of the Communist Opposition in it. The two were of about equal strength but both very weak, a tiny minority even among the few workers that started the movement. Both operated fairly independent of their respective headquarters, with no outside help in the form of speakers or otherwise.

But both managed to get their voices heard, having a more systematic approach to the problems involved than the other workers.

In fact, in the early days it was the Communists who dominated the discussions and gave expressions to the sentiment of the workers. But while the Opposition made a realistic analysis of the problems they were up against, the Party members took the well known attitude that they had been taught by their leaders. 'We are members of the Party, therefore we are the leaders, therefore we are right on all questions, and that does not have to be proven or even pointed out'. On concrete issues, this attitude reflected itself most sharply on the question of collection of food for the unemployed. With groceries throwing away car-loads that could not be sold every week and with farmers close to town, glad to get rid of what they could not sell, the Opposition saw the possibilities of such work. It also could see this as a good way of rallying the masses and, once this was done, more radical steps could be taken. The course of events has completely borne this out. The Party members, on the other hand, insisted on evictions as the starting point. Some victim should be found, his furniture should be set back in, and then, they argued, the workers would rush into the council, militant demonstrations could be staged, and more relief would be forthcoming.

This theory was never tried in practice, the workers were somewhat sceptical of it, and preferred the program of the Opposition.

The scheme of collecting food was derided as 'organized beggary' by the Party members. But when they were pinned down on the issue, when, for instance, it was pointed out to them that the 14th Plenum of their own Party explicitly calls for such activities, they would answer as follows: 'We do not have to read those decisions in order to know the policies of the Party on that point. It is for the WIR to collect food, not for an unemployed council. As long as we have no section of the WIR in town, we can collect no food'. The same Plenum mentions the 'mechanical approach' that many Party members have to their work. There seem to be some reasons for that.

Now, there were also points on which the two groups agreed, and where they cooperated. When a Party member made a motion to elect delegates to

the hunger march that the Party organized last Summer, the Opposition supported this and the motion was passed. Five delegates were elected. But then, when the Party man informed them as to when the march would take place, it happened that the day arrived and the delegates were ready but no marchers appeared. Later on, the march actually came off, and it was announced that a detachment would go through Fort Wayne, hold a meeting while there and pick up delegates. Again, nobody showed up, the detachment had in the last minute picked another route, and the crowd that was waiting for a meeting was sadly disappointed.

Other attempts that the unemployed made to get in touch with the unemployed movement of the Party did not fare any better. It was on a motion from an Opposition member that a letter was written to the National Center of the unemployed councils in New York. The letter asked for information as to their membership, as to the demands they raised, as to the methods they used in putting them over and what success they had had in this respect. Also, the letter inquired about conditions for affiliation. No answer came, but on a second letter they got provoked. The answer was signed by H. Benjamin himself, and stated that the only condition for affiliation was acceptance of the demand for unemployed insurance with full wages and whatever goes with it. Further, the council would have to stage 'militant demonstrations' and fight against evictions in a 'revolutionary way'. As to membership or success in getting his demands granted, comrade Benjamin did not commit himself.

All this happened in the early days of the movement. Later on, as it grew, and assumed a mass character, the Party men faded into insignificance. They were, on a couple of occasions, nominated for some minor offices but they refused to accept. From the very beginning, they regarded it as below their dignity to do day-to-day work in the movement, so naturally whatever following they once had, they have lost. It once happened that they brought some speaker down, who immediately attacked the council here as a fake, as an agency of the bosses, and what not. Certainly, the Party has had its chances to teach this council a little better. But they have let the chances go, due to their lack of willingness to work with organizations that do not accept their program 100 percent and also due to the chaos that reigns in the Party and in its work.

Forging Ahead

As to the Opposition, the first article dealt with some of the things it has succeeded in making the council do. At the time this is written, the council is taking a more radical attitude than ever before. It has just presented a series of

demands, such as moratorium on rents, free gas, light and water, a moratorium on installment payments on homes, free clothing and shoes for all persons, married or single, children and adults, etc., and that is largely, if not wholly, due to the influence of the Communist Party (Opposition). And the majority of the workers know this. The Opposition has not signed up scores of members that will be given the tasks of old-timers in our movement, and therefore give up and drop out after a couple of weeks. Neither has it tried by boisterous bravado to get into the headlines. But it has succeeded in really establishing a fertile field for itself and the ideas of Communism. The workers are willing to listen to us because they know we are their friends and because without us they would be far worse off.

With persistent efforts and patient work, the Communist Party (Opposition) feels confident that it will be able to root itself among the workers in Fort Wayne.

5. The Harlem Tenants League¹³

Edward Welsh

The Harlem Tenants League is now in a deplorable condition which threatens its very existence. After many months of hard work, this organization was finally built up to a point where it could count several hundred members – mostly Negro working people – where it became an effective factor in the struggle against landlords and in winning the Negro masses for the class struggle. Now, because of the destructive effects of the ‘new Party line’ and ‘leadership’ in the mass organization, it is in a very serious crisis.

The crisis broke out when Moore, well-known throughout the Party as a notorious opportunist and careerist, with the able assistance of Williams, Briggs and their kind, began to bring the Party situation into the Tenants League. Supporters of the CP Majority Group have quite an influence in the Tenants League and have the confidence of the non-Party workers so that the first task of the disrupters was to ‘clean out the Lovestoneites’. The wildest charges (‘agents of the landlords’) were hurled at us in an effort to discredit us in the eyes of the Negro workers – but without avail. Then the meetings of the HTL were packed with Party members who had never been, and still are not, members of the League but who voted the first time they ever came down. The lists of the organization were padded with the names of the Party members without any authorization. These cheap tricks and maneuvers were of course obvious to all members of the League with the result that many became disgusted, the membership fell off very seriously. The faith of the Negro workers in Communist leadership suffered bad blows, and a deep protest movement against the disruption of Moore developed.

These policies – particularly, the bringing in of the inner-Party struggles into the Tenants League to disrupt it, and Moore’s absolutely unbearable arbitrary bureaucratic conduct – so that out of a membership of five hundred about thirty come down to meetings now. Hundreds of tenants who built up the

13 *Revolutionary Age*, 1 November 1929, pp. 13–14.

League and were sympathetic to the Party were driven away by Moore and his trickery and terrorism. The struggle against the landlords was forgotten by Moore and the meetings used for the purpose of fighting the 'Lovestoneites' (Welsh, Campbell, Cole, Nemser, Anna Thompson etc.). In fact, recently, the meetings seemed to have only one point on the order of business: attacks and slanders on those comrades, who were rarely granted the floor by Moore to defend themselves. Even non-Party tenants were denied the floor if Moore felt that they were opposed to his 'policies' – as indeed they nearly always are.

The lengths to which Moore and his friends went are inconceivable. When Welsh was elected as one of the delegates of the HTL to a conference to endorse the Communist municipal candidates the hand-picked 'Credentials Committee' (Williams) unseated him. Then, when Moore found that his attempts to discredit Welsh and the other comrades as 'agents of the landlords' were unsuccessful and that the sentiment of the tenants was bitterly against him, he stooped to the vilest form of anti-Communist trickery by attempting to stir up race-hatred between Negro and white workers, stating that Campbell, Nemser, Welsh, etc. were associates of Lovestone 'who hated the sight of Negroes'! Fortunately this miserable dodge had no effect, reacting instead upon Moore and his friends.

Finally, in desperation, Moore packed a recent meeting with Party members from all parts of the city, many of them who had never heard of the Tenants League, and put across a 'reorganization' which removed the best workers from the Executive Committee and from the responsible posts and added to the Executive Committee non-members of the League, people who were not even present at the meeting where they were 'added' (Moreau, Golden)! The tide of resentment ran high and at the next meeting this led to tenants walking out in a body as a protest.

Moore has not succeeded in discrediting the 'Lovestoneites'; he – and the policy of the present leadership whose spokesman he is – has done great harm to the League, alienating dozens and scores of sympathisers and endangering the life of the whole organization. What is worse, he has fast discredited the Party and has already greatly undermined the prestige and influence of Communism.

Fortunately, with our cooperation the resentment of the tenants has been turned into constructive channels and the chances are very good for rescuing the organizations from the destructive grasp of Moore and the present 'leadership'.

The HTL is the only mass organization of any sort we have among Negroes today and it would be a crime against the Party and the working class to smash it by bringing in the inner-Party struggle, by injecting into it the Party-wrecking

campaign. The tenants are up in arms to save the organization from destruction. The comrades of the CP Majority Group are determined to save the Tenants League, to develop it into a broad fighting organization in which all working-class tenants who agree with its aims can find a place, no matter what their other opinions may be.

Race and Racism



6. The Church vs. the Negro¹⁴

Grace Lamb

As Negro people crowd into churches on Sunday mornings, few seem to know and none perhaps reflects upon the inhuman treatment which the Christian church of all denominations meted out to the Negro of America since he first set foot as a slave upon the soil of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619.

Christian Negroes are utterly oblivious to the role played by the various Christian denominations toward themselves now, or toward their ancestors, while laboring on the stony road of slavery, for upward of two hundred and fifty years in America.

Because of this sad forgetfulness on the part of Negro churchgoers, it is the purpose of this article to cite a few facts concerning Christianity versus the Negro.

The early settlers in America had before them the task of developing a rugged continent. They were in need of labor and had no scruples about seizing hold of black slaves to accomplish the task. So Puritans, Huguenots and Southern Christian gentlemen vied with each other in the great slave traffic!

At first, however, the pious colonists had some scruples about enslaving their fellow Christians and therefore they surmounted this difficulty by allowing the slaves to remain pagan. In this they followed the example of the chosen people (the ancient Hebrews) who enslaved the *heathen* who were around and about them. Thus, religious instruction was withheld from the Negro slaves in America for a long period. Indeed for a hundred years after the importation of slaves into the country, they still labored and died pagan or with but the vaguest knowledge of Christianity.

And devout early New England clergy frequently received 'pagan' Negro slaves in payment for their ministrations to white Christians. Under these circumstances they could not well afford to instruct slaves in the doctrines of Christianity. The institution of marriage valued and paraded by Christians

14 *Revolutionary Age*, 1 August 1930, p. 4.

was cast aside in case of slaves. Even as old King Solomon made concubines of slave maidens, so did our early-Christian slaveholding-gentry of New England follow his example and many a brown and yellow child was born of slave women, the paternity of which was unknown, much like the paternity of hogs and sheep in their fields. In the North no less than in the South, Christian ministers upheld slavery as an institution and wrote exhaustive treatises in its defense.

Bishops and clergy as well as laymen owned slaves because it was sanctioned by Holy Writ (and also very profitable besides).

When it was finally pointed out to the masters that slavery could be given firmer hold in the country if the slaves themselves acquiesced to it through obedience to the church, then only were slaves given religious instruction.

The slaves were taught that God instituted slavery, that he cursed Ham, and made him and his descendents black so that the white man might enslave them without compunction. Slavery was a God-given favor and slaves were to be glad that their ancestors were torn from their native soil; thus might they endure the rod meekly, inasmuch as they were receiving the priceless gift of Christ, through whom they would finally reach a heavenly home somewhere high in the skies. What if, for such great boons, a hard life and oft-times cruel death was their lot meantime?

This spurious form of Christianity was implanted in the bruised and bleeding scars of the poor slave. He grasped this false hope as a drowning man grasps at a straw. From then on he set his eyes upon the mirage of a vague and distant future where sorrow would be no more, nor the frightful lash of the overseer pursue him there.

Thus the Negro was Christianised with conscious effort to ensure his docility and obedience to the exploiters of his labor, who never intended that he should be other than chattel. This method of Christianizing the Negro in America has been referred to as the sum of all villainies.

In 1804 the General Conference of the Methodist church instructed its preachers to exhort slaves to render due respect and obedience to their masters. In other words, the Methodist church was lending a hand in checking the spirit of revolt that might rise in the breast of a slave against that inimical Christian teaching, which enslaved him the more.

A study of the history of the Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, the Unitarians, the Congregationalists, the Universalists, the Campbellites, all will show that they have backed slavery throughout. Even the Quakers, with individual brilliant exceptions, backed up slavery.

An abolitionist, Stephen S. Foster, is quoted as having written in the *Herald of Freedom*, anti-slavery newspaper of the time as follows:

When I dare look back upon my shattered form I think that prisons will be needed for me but little longer. Within the last fifteen months, four times have they opened their dismal cells for my reception. Twenty-four times have my churchmen dragged me from their temples of worship, and twice have they thrown me with great violence from a second story of their building regardless of consequences. Once at a Baptist meeting house they gave me an evangelical kick in the side, which left me for weeks an invalid. . . . Time out of memory (the Christians) have broken up my meetings with violence and hunted me with brick and bad eggs. . . . Once in the name of law and justice they punished me with a fine for preaching the gospel with an interpretation unfavorable to slavery; once in a mob of two thousand people have they deliberately attempted to murder me and were foiled in their designs only after inflicting twenty blows on my head and neck, by the heroism of a brave and noble woman. . . .

The church may boast that its influence abolished slavery but the facts do not bear it out. The Northern church opposed slavery only after the Northern states had found it economically unprofitable and decided upon wage-slavery as more practicable for the then oncoming manufacturing and industrial era in the United States. But ever after this, the 'Saints' from the North continued to reap their reward in profits from the slave-ships which anchored in their harbours. No Christian denomination opposed this indirect exploitation of the slave.

A Portuguese Roman Catholic priest, Las Casas, was the first to introduce Negro slavery into the new world. He spoke of the 'robust, indefatigable African race' and recommended it as proper for enslavement because of its superior labor-power. It was he who went to Brazil and from there the slave-trade flowed over North and South America.

The Roman Catholic Church in the United States never took a firm stand against slavery and since it did not condemn it we are justified in saying that it upheld it. Catholicism was a silent partner to the slave system. It taught quite openly that things of the body counted but little, that sin, as 'slavery of the soul', was her prime concern to abolish. Let the slave remain chattel and bow before the will and whip of his master, then, perhaps that might save his soul!

Such was the attitude of our Christian churches with regard to the chattel-slavery of the Negroes in this country. Today chattel-slavery is abolished but the attitude of the churches remains practically the same with regard to wage-slavery which followed in the wake of chattel-slavery. That church has yet to

rise that would take up the banners against wage-slavery and the system that makes it, nor does the history of church and religion warrant us to expect such a blessing. Church and religion always have been, are today and always will be, in the very nature of things, a friend to the ruling masters and an enemy to the slaving masses.

7. Marxism and the 'Negro Question'¹⁵

Communist Party Opposition

Introduction

Of all problems facing the American working class and the American Communist movement, the 'Negro question' is the most specifically American of all American questions, with only secondary analogies to conditions elsewhere. It is a question of first-rate importance to the proletariat of this country. And yet of all questions it is not the one to which the most serious attention on the part of Marxian theoreticians has been devoted. There has in fact not yet been made in America any serious analysis of the Negro question from the Marxist point of view. The general backwardness and sterility of revolutionary theory in America and the traditional American-socialist 'nihilism' on the 'Negro question' is an indirect expression of the 'white-supremacy' ideology ('There is no Negro question!' 'There is only an economic question of workers against bosses!') and is partly responsible for this condition. And, although the Communist movement rapidly broke with the shameless white chauvinism of large sections of the pre-war Socialist movement, the theoretical re-orientation has been much slower. Until a short time ago, the Communist movement remained content with vague and platitudinous phrases, and when recently a new theoretical departure was attempted under the stimulus of the Communist International, it went astray as a result of a fundamentally false orientation ('national minority' theory). A truly Marxist theory of the 'Negro question' and even a truly Marxist analysis of its main features still remain for the future.

At the same time, distinct signs are not absent pointing to a definite revival of the independent social activity of the Negro masses in the North and in the South, in the urban and in the rural centers, under the stimulus of the economic crisis, the great growth in unemployment and the incredible chaos in the cotton economy of the South. In this situation the unsatisfactory state of

15 *The Road to Communism*, Volume 2, Number 2, Spring 1935, pp. 1-7.

current Communist theory on the 'Negro question' (especially in this country) is very serious and even dangerous.

The Status of the American Negro

The status of the Negro in the United States is in a very real sense specific to this country; only in the most general sense does it bear any relation to the status of the colored people in other parts of the world – in the West Indies, in Africa, in South America, etc. Only against the background of the special course of American historical development, only in connection with the concrete revelation of social forces in this country, can the status of the American Negro be understood and the problem deriving therefrom appreciated.

The Negro people in the United States do not constitute a colonial people under the heel of American imperialism. All of the essential characteristics of a colony (geographical separation from metropolis, the distinctness of the national economy of the colony and its specific relation to the imperialist economy of the metropolis, etc.) are absent. But just as little do the Negro people constitute a national minority in the real sense of the term. For the formation of a nation, a community (and distinctness) of language, of territory, of economic life, a national economy of psychic structure (culture) and tradition is necessary. Not a single one of these conditions is characteristic of the Negroes in the United States.

The attempt to supply the necessary community of territory by the creation of a fictitious 'Negroland' (the 'black belt') runs contrary to every fact of American history and to every conception of contemporaneous tendencies and movements among the Negro people. The fundamental falsity of the 'national minority' orientation comes to crass expression in the obvious inappropriateness of the slogan of 'self-determination' (the proper slogan for a people suffering from national oppression) to the condition of the Negro in America. The slogan of self-determination, in a situation where every force of bourgeois law, custom, and public opinion constantly operates to maintain and widen the breach between the races, is an objective support to Jim Crowism. The point of view of the Negro people as a national minority is false in conception and dangerous in concrete application.

The Negro people in the United States constitute, in the words of Lenin, a subject-caste on a racial basis. The Negro people form an integral element of the American nation and of the American national economy; their culture, territory and language are all characteristically American. In the American social edifice they, as a race, occupy a peculiar and depressed status, a caste status.

A close analogy would be the position of the 'depressed classes', the 'untouchables', in Hindu society in India.

The depressed caste status of the American Negro is rooted primarily in the semi-servile condition of the Negro farmer in Southern agriculture.

The underprivileged state of the Negro socially (Jim Crow, segregation, lynch-law) and politically follow directly. Fundamentally, the Negro in the United States forms a well-defined subject-caste with a distinctly inferior economic, social and political status.

The Historical Roots of the Caste Status of the Negro

Caste status is, as Lenin has pointed out more than once, essentially a pre-capitalist institution, a phase or a remnant of a non-capitalist (and economic) order. How to account for the existence of this 'remnant of feudalism' in the highly developed capitalist system of this country is the first problem of a Marxist approach to the 'Negro question'.

The roots of the present subject-status of the Negro in America must be traced back to the days of slavery, nearly three-quarters of a century ago. Under slavery there was an immediate and obvious basis for the social subjection of the black men as such – their economically enslaved condition as a race. Had the American Civil War really affected the complete emancipation of the Negro slave, there would indeed have been no ground for the continued existence of the Negro as an inferior caste. But the victorious industrial bourgeoisie of the North adopted a course of action that led to quite other results. It rejected the 'Radical' plan of Reconstruction, a plan that envisaged the complete destruction of the economic and political power of the slaveocracy and the 'real' (bourgeois) emancipation of the Negro slaves, i.e., the transformation into free peasant-proprietors and into free proletarians. On the contrary, the Northern bourgeoisie, after considerable hesitation and vacillation, threw its support into the 'Conservative' plan of Reconstruction which aimed to conciliate the old slaveowners by abolishing chattel-slavery in name but retaining it in somewhat modified form in fact. The bourgeois-democratic revolution – the essence of the Civil War – was thereby stifled and distorted; the emancipation of the Negro was rendered incomplete, even from a consistent bourgeois standpoint. Thus, the present economic status of the Negro farmer is essentially a survival of slavery. And when, in the course of time, the Negro farmer comes to enter industry, he naturally brings with him his caste status. The specifically depressed economic position of the Negro is the basis upon which the whole system of social, political and cultural subjection is reared.

The caste status of the American Negro is essentially a pre-capitalist survival, a 'relic of feudalism'. But such pre-capitalist survivals find a welcome place in the decaying structure of capitalism in its final, imperialist-monopoly epoch. The bourgeoisie is no longer, as it was in the great days of its youth, the ruthless destroyer of the obsolete and the reactionary. In its senility 'the decaying bourgeoisie . . . supports everything that is backward, dying, and medieval . . .' (Lenin). The specifically depressed economic status of the Negro peasant and proletarian serves as a valuable source of super-profit for monopoly-capital – in a strictly analogous manner to colonial exploitation. At the same time it serves a point of support for the class domination of the bourgeoisie ('Divide and rule!') For this reason the race oppression of the Negro has become an integral element of the bourgeois-imperialist system in this country.

It is in the specific caste status of the American Negro and the integration of this status into the structure of American imperialism that race prejudice ('white chauvinism') has its roots. Class interests are directly transmitted into class ideology; this is a fundamental social mechanism. The caste status of the American Negro – so advantageous to the ruling class from the viewpoint of economic profit and class power – is transformed into the corresponding class ideology – the history of the 'inherent racial inferiority' of the Negro, race prejudice, etc. But 'the ruling ideas of any age are the ideas of the ruling class' (Marx). Race prejudice thus develops into an element of the currently accepted social thought (bourgeois ideology) and is absorbed by the other classes of society to the degree that they are under the ideological influence of the ruling class. It is because the white American workers and farmers are so 'backward', i.e., so much under the spiritual influence of the bourgeoisie, that they are so afflicted with anti-Negro race prejudice. A secondary factor in the same direction is the role that the feeling of racial superiority plays as a form of psychic compensation to the backward masses of the white toilers for the incredible miseries of their everyday existence. Nor can the deliberate activities of the white ruling class in stirring up race hatred be minimised.

The great Negro migrations during the last two decades, in the course of which scores of thousands of Negro farmers swarmed to the great Northern industrial centers and to the basic industries of the land, really introduced a new stage in the history of the American Negro. They affected a profound social fermentation and a basic realignment of class forces. They faced the Negro masses with a whole series of new problems arising out of the new urban and industrial environment. They really created the modern Negro proletariat. They greatly stimulated the development of the Negro bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie and seriously transformed the relations between these classes. They had a profound effect upon the Negro peasantry in the South,

sunk in the mire of peonage and semi-serfdom. They also greatly influenced the relations of two races in the North as well as in the South. All of these phenomena soon made themselves evident in their effect upon the changed structure of American Negro society.

The social organization of the Negro people in this country, although, of course, closely related to and in fact integrated into American society as such, bears a characteristic aspect, especially in the relation of classes and the specific gravity of each in the whole. The organization of Negro society resembles, in certain respects, the organization of society in a colony or a subject-nation.

The Negro bourgeoisie is rather weak numerically (absolutely and relatively) and even weaker economically. It has no hold upon or contact with basic industry; it is almost exclusively confined to certain very unimportant branches, usually organized on a small scale, or to commercial and related occupations that emerge in the large Negro sections of the big cities, South as well as North. But through the Negro bourgeoisie (and through the conservative sections of the professional 'race leaders') the white American bourgeoisie exerts tremendous influence over the masses of the Negro people. The Negro bourgeoisie is the class agency of the white domination over the Negro people and it operates with borrowed power. The fundamental standpoint of the Negro bourgeoisie was theoretically formulated by Booker T. Washington in the famous 'Atlanta Compromise': the Negro is to be content with his place in the American (bourgeois) scheme of things. He is to bend his energies toward becoming an efficient servant of the white master. Any present aspiration for social and political rights – not to speak of social equality – is a vain and dangerous illusion. In the South the Negroes are to acquiesce in their complete political disfranchisement; in the North they are to serve as blind voting-cattle for the Republican Party. Lately, an infamous flirtation with the Democratic Party (in North and South) has been initiated (the DePriest 'non-partisan' conference). Within the last year the crusade against Communism has become an important part of the services rendered by the Negro bourgeoisie to the white masters. The political activities of the 'race leaders' of this class are marked by clique squabbles, gross corruption and shameless patronage – all at the expense of the Negro masses. Of the emancipation of their people they know nothing and care less.

Through the sham social prestige lent it by the white ruling class, the Negro bourgeoisie and its professional 'race leaders' have been able hitherto to dominate the social and political ideas of the backward Negro masses. In this work the widespread network of Negro social and fraternal societies (especially the churches) has played a very important role.

The Negro petty bourgeoisie and professionals (most of the professionals belong to the petty bourgeoisie) are more numerous although proportionately also smaller among the Negroes than among the whites. (Only in the proportion of clergy to the population do the Negroes show precedence.) Like the bourgeoisie, this class found a firm basis of existence (especially in the North) only with the great Negro migrations and the creation of the huge Negro cities in the relatively free atmosphere of the North. In the post-war 'renaissance', a period of deep-going fermentation and real achievement, the Negro intellectual played a brilliant role, especially in literature and the fine arts.

As a consequence of the characteristic caste status of the Negro people in American society, the Negro petty bourgeoisie is destined to play a far more significant and progressive social role in the struggle of the Negro people for emancipation and in the general social struggle than the white petty bourgeoisie in the analogous situation. As a significant factor in the life and development of the race, the Negro bourgeoisie is second only to the Negro proletariat.

A large part of the Negro petty bourgeoisie is bound up – economically, organizationally and ideologically – with the Negro bourgeoisie, which it aids in carrying out its specific role as the agency of white capitalism among the Negroes. Considerable sections, however, have already gone a long way in freeing themselves, more or less, from the spiritual domination of the bourgeoisie, or at least from the crassest bourgeois prejudice. The social outlook of these sections of the petty bourgeoisie has hitherto been marked, quite inevitably considering their class position, by its endless vagaries, by its extravagant oscillations from one extreme to another, by its fantastic utopianism combined with an equally fantastic 'practicalism' – but all within the framework of the basic bourgeois preconceptions. Especially characteristic is its strange faith in the belief that the 'Negro question' can be solved within the framework of capitalism, perhaps with the benevolent aid of the white capitalists themselves. At one time Garveyism, an essentially reactionary philosophy based on an inverted form of the 'white-supremacy' gospel of the white masters and shot through with the crassest demagoguery and the grossest charlatanism, had considerable hold over the lower middle-class elements of the large Negro cities. Now Garveyism is happily dead. Today the Negro intellectuals and professionals are lost in the absurd utopia of creating a self-contained Negro economy through utilizing here the 'organized buying power' of the race or through some equally efficacious means. The capricious and ever-changing vagaries that dominate the Negro petty bourgeoisie are a certain indication of the gulf that exists between it and the masses of the Negro people, the

peasants and workers, whose interests are poles apart from the unreal fantasies of the small man or professional. Its estrangement from its own people with the consequent lack of political or social stability is unquestionably the greatest inner weakness of the Negro petty bourgeoisie.

Nevertheless, from the general historical viewpoint, the Negro petty bourgeoisie still has progressive potentialities in view of the essentially democratic character of the struggle against the caste oppression of the Negroes. Some sections of the Negro intellectuals are already marching leftwards, primarily as a result of the profound impression made upon them by the example of the Soviet Union. But the actual realization of its historical potentialities implies an end to reactionary and futile utopian dreaming, a participation in their interests and aspirations, a close alliance with the advanced sections of the proletariat, white and black.

As has already been pointed out the Negro farmers in the South (where the bulk of the Negro people and the vast majority of the Negro farmers are found) are not 'free' farmers in the capitalistic sense of the term. They occupy an intermediate position between 'free' farmers and slaves – a semi-serf position. This is the basic element of the caste status of the Negro people in this country. There are practically no Negro agricultural capitalists and almost as few wealthy farmers. The vast majority of the Negro farmers – whether tenants (and the proportion of tenancy is very high) or nominal 'owners' – find themselves in the category of the poorest of the poor, exploited in pre-capitalist and semi-feudal forms of exploitation (peonage, share-cropping, etc., in many cases even forced labor). The Negro agricultural worker is not a 'free' worker in the bourgeois sense; he also toils under semi-slave relations of exploitation. On this basis, a superstructure of caste-oppression has been raised of incredible viciousness. The most elementary form of economic organization is prohibited under penalty of death (the cases of the Phillips County, Arkansas, and the Camp Hill, Alabama, sharecroppers unions).

Yet even here the wave of Negro migrations and the experiences of the World War have had an immense effect. The bleak seclusion, the dreary isolation of decades, the hopeless desolation, was broken. A vigorous breath of fresh air swept through the poisonous atmosphere of the old South. The vision of the Negro peasant was suddenly and immensely enlarged; intimate contacts were established with migrated friends and relatives in the North; and understanding began to dawn that things must not be always – and are not everywhere – the same. The Negro migrations and the World War stimulated the maturity of the Negro peasant as a vital factor in the movement for freedom.

The Negro proletariat is primarily to be found in unskilled and semi-skilled capacities in large-scale basic industry. Although he has become a proletariat

he has brought his caste status with him; he occupies a position of distinct inferiority in this scheme of things in industry. He has no access to the more desirable situations; he is hindered in his approach to skilled or semi-skilled jobs; he is forced into the least-paid and most menial occupations; he is discriminated against in wages and working conditions. His recent peasant background and his lack of collective experience in the labor movement are expressed in his backwardness in class consciousness and in his indifferent or even negative attitude on many of the basic questions of the class struggle. (This tendency, of course, is helped by the antagonistic attitude of the white workers and labor leaders). The white employing class has not been slow in utilizing this backwardness of the Negro workers and the antagonism between the Negro and white workers in their attack on the labor movement and on the working class as a whole.

Yet in spite of all temporary circumstances, the Negro proletariat constitutes historically the natural leadership of the Negro people in its social struggle in American society. The leading role of the proletariat within the Negro people is made inevitable by the inner processes of capitalist production which thrust the proletariat to the fore of modern society, organize it, stimulate its class consciousness, widen its political horizon and give it that collective self-confidence, solidarity and consciousness of aim which are the necessary attributes of class leadership. The emergence of the Negro proletariat as the leader of the Negro people still remains for the future. The creation of the modern Negro proletariat, through the great migration, is certainly the most significant event in the history of the Negro since the days of Reconstruction.

The Negro Worker and American Labor

The sudden influx of tens of thousands of black workers into Northern industry inevitably aggravated the anti-Negro prejudice of the backward workers – and the vast majority of the American workers are still backward. At the same time the narrow and exclusive craft structure and the opportunist philosophy of American trade unionism [has been] observed from the very beginning as a most serious obstacle in the way of the black worker in industry. The conservative trade unions, in spite of occasional fine phrases, have practically closed their doors to the Negro workers and have all but invited them to throw in their lot with the white capitalists as scabs and strike-breakers – a course incessantly urged by the conservative Negro leaders as well. The darkest page in the history of the American organized labor movement is its shameful record of antipathy and discrimination against the black worker.

But the process of the class struggle promises to heal even this ominous breach in the ranks of the American proletariat. The white heat of class struggle will burn out the corruption of race prejudice. The fraternization of white and colored workers in the South during recent strikes, however hesitating, uncertain and unstable, is a straw in the wind. The slow but inevitable deepening of the class consciousness of the white proletariat, i.e., its growing ideological liberation from the bourgeoisie, will certainly deliver the white workers from the thoroughly bourgeois curse of race prejudice.

The submergence of national and racial differences within the proletariat in the firm ties of class solidarity is an indispensable requisite for the triumph of the revolutionary struggle against capitalism. The struggle against the race prejudice of the white workers is a fundamental task of all revolutionary forces in the labor movement. In the Communist movement, in which all inner-class distinctions vanish, any open or disguised manifestation of race prejudice, which comes as a result of the pressure of bourgeois ideology on the working class, must be deliberately and consistently eliminated.

Negro Emancipation and the Proletarian Revolution

The whole burden of the analysis of the status of the Negro people in this country goes to prove that the deliverance of the Negro people from their caste existence is in its content essentially a democratic task – the only form of uncompleted bourgeois revolution in the United States today. In that respect it is similar to the liberation of subject nations or colonies. Only the elimination of the underlying economic conditions upon which the subjection of the American Negro is predicated can make possible any real emancipation. The radical eradication of the semi-feudal forms of exploitation, of peonage, tenancy, share-cropping, furnishing, the shattering of the power of the Southern landlords through nationalization of the land and its distribution among the cultivators, the elimination of all elements of inferiority in the Negro's status in industry – these are the basic conditions upon which the social and political liberation of the colored people is conditioned. These measures represent merely the demands of consistent democracy: they are in all respects akin to the classical ideals of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, the great French Revolution, for example. Not a single one is a specifically socialist demand – not one necessarily implies the socialization of all the means of production, etc.

But the democratic character of the task of Negro liberation from caste status by no means implies that the 'Negro question' today can be solved within the framework of the capitalist system and capitalist democracy. So

anti-democratic has the bourgeoisie become in its period of decay, so organically bound up with everything that is outlived, reactionary and decadent, that the realization of the basic democratic demands is possible only through the overthrow of capitalist 'democracy', through the concentration of political power in the hands of the proletariat. In such dialectical contradiction does history move that only the dictatorship of the proletariat can guarantee democracy to the masses and bring real democracy, for the first time, to the Negro people. A whole historical period has passed since the Civil War; a bourgeois revolution in the USA today is a historical impossibility – today only a proletarian revolution can accomplish what the American bourgeois revolution that was the Civil War failed to do.

From this viewpoint, the class differentiation now rapidly taking place among the Negro people and destroying any possible 'racial unity' of all classes, is to be regarded as a profoundly progressive and revolutionary phenomenon. The Negro bourgeoisie can only be a reactionary force in the struggle for the emancipation of its own race, so firm and numerous are the bonds that tie it to white capital. The more completely and the more rapidly there takes place the class separation of the broad masses of the Negro people from the Negro bourgeoisie, the better. At the opposite pole stands the Negro proletariat, whose tremendous historical role as the chosen vanguard of the Negro people is only emphasised by the close organic link between the democratic emancipation of the Negro people and the socialist revolution of the proletariat in this country. Under the hegemony of and in close alliance with the proletariat, the Negro peasantry and the broad sections of the Negro petty bourgeoisie can play a profoundly revolutionary role. The process of class differentiation among the Negro people lays the basis for the liberation of the Negro masses from the influence of the white bourgeoisie (transmitted through the Negro bourgeoisie) and the achievement of the hegemony of the proletariat in the struggle for Negro emancipation.

It is clear that the racial (that is, caste) emancipation of the Negro cannot come as the result of any 'purely racial' movement – of any movement deliberately aiming to subordinate, in the name of an unreal 'racial unity', the masses of the Negro people to the narrow interests of the Negro bourgeoisie (who work hand in glove with their white paymasters), of any movement consciously striving to divorce the liberation struggle of the Negro people from the chief social movement of our times, the class war of labor against capital. The racial emancipation of the American Negro, in the present historical situation, is possible only as an integral aspect and as an inevitable consequence of the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system, of the victory of the proletariat.

Immediate Struggle and the General Perspective

It is clear that this far-reaching perspective can today assume vitality and general significance only if it can be shown in life itself to emerge as a natural development of a program of immediate action intimately associated with every phase of Negro life under the caste-oppression of American society. The Communists must defend and represent the basic interests of the Negro workers, of the Negro peasant and of the Negro petty bourgeoisie, to the degree that the latter constitutes a progressive historical force. The Communists must try to weld together the masses of the Negro people (workers, peasants, petty-bourgeoisie) under the leadership of the Negro proletariat and against the white ruling class and its Negro agents (the Negro bourgeoisie). The Communists must throw all energies into breaking down all barriers between the Negro and white workers and into strengthening the bonds between the white workers and the Negro people. The Communist program must champion the abolition of peonage and the serf conditions of the Negro farmers in the South, the organization of leagues of share-croppers and tenants and unions of farm-laborers. The Communists must stand for the complete equality of the Negro in industry, the smashing of the barriers against the Negro workers in the trade unions, the organization of the unorganized and the unskilled colored workers. The Communists must take up the struggle against lynching, Jim Crowism, and discrimination. The Communists demand the complete social and political equality of the Negro race. The Communists strive to break the hold of the capitalist political parties over the Negro masses and to win these masses to the cause of labor, which is their cause as well, and to labor class political action (the Labor Party as the champion of the oppressed Negroes).

Through the participation of the Negro masses in these struggles (and of Negroes and whites side by side), through the development of these struggles to ever higher and higher levels, the road will be opened for the realization of the far-reaching perspective of the final emancipation of the Negro people from their submerged caste position as a phase of the general emancipation of the toiling masses from the yoke of capitalism.

8. National Negro Congress 1936–7¹⁶

Edward K. Welsh

National Negro Congress: What is it to be Like? (15 February 1936)

Several months ago, an announcement was made and a call issued for a National Negro Congress to be held in Chicago on 14, 15 and 16 February. At the time the call was issued, considerable interest was manifested in certain quarters which seemed to indicate a keen desire among Negroes for something of this sort, together with a recognition of the possibility that the Congress might produce certain positive values in the way of advancing the interests of the Negro people.

No one can question the need for or the timeliness of such a Congress. The plight of the Negro masses in this country, particularly after seven years of the most serious crisis in the history of capitalism, has created the feeling among Negroes generally, and also among many other elements in society who hold a progressive point of view on this question, that something must be done to meet this grave problem. That there is a basis for such a Congress is further indicated by the fact that, in the past few years, several small conferences, held under different auspices, have taken place in various parts of the country where attempts were made to grapple with certain phases of this very same problem. There is no doubt but that a national Congress, if properly organized and devoid of either self-seeking or partisan considerations, could produce an instrument to galvanize the broad masses of Negroes into action for their own defense and direct them towards beating back the growing forces of reaction.

In considering this important problem of developing such a movement, certain fundamentals must be borne in mind and should be the starting point.

16 *Workers Age*, 15 February 1936, p. 5; *Workers Age*, 21 March 1936, pp. 3, 6; *Workers Age*, 16 October 1937, pp. 3, 6.

Under the conditions of modern capitalism, any movement, to be really progressive in its direction and really effective in its results, must be basically a movement of labor, must be rooted primarily in the trade unions and mass organizations of the working class, with the support, of course, of all other elements who are willing to back up its program. This is as true of a National Negro Congress as it is true of the American League against War and Fascism or any other movement that is serious about its intentions. The moment that this basic fact is ignored or misunderstood, the movement faces grave dangers leading ultimately to sterility or worse.

Unfortunately, those who are responsible for calling the National Negro Congress have utterly disregarded these basic considerations with the result that the congress is well on its way towards becoming one of the newer models of all-class political monstrosities commonly referred to as 'people's front'. Of course there are many who will consider it quite an achievement. Is this not bringing the decisions of the seventh World Congress to the Negro masses? A 'people's front' in France! Why not a Negro 'people's front' in America?

Local sponsoring committees have been organized in over forty communities throughout the United States. An examination of the make-up of these committees will reveal some startling facts. In almost every instance, the sponsoring committees have a preponderance of Negro ministers. The remaining members consist of various types of petty-bourgeois elements including businessmen, lawyers, college professors or their wives, representatives of Republican clubs and other cheap and discredited politicians plus a host of other unimportant elements representing no one but themselves, interested only in finding a place in the sun for themselves, and with no objection, of course, to seeing their names in print. The composition of these committees seldom varies and is about the same everywhere. Not even in the most highly industrialised centers such as New York, Chicago, Detroit, Pittsburgh and the many other places where Negroes are employed by the tens of thousands in industry, or where Negroes are organized into trade unions or are seeking to be organized, do we find any genuine representation of these workers on any of these committees. If there are any, by chance, they are completely snowed under by 'respectable' people. Many committees include as signers the names of some of the worst anti-labor, anti-union elements among the Negroes. Considering this state of affairs it should surprise no one that Ham Fish, the vicious Red-baiter, has expressed his intentions of attending the Congress for the purpose of attempting to utilise it to further the Borah-for-President campaign.

In New York City, which contains a Negro population of over three hundred thousand, the composition of the sponsoring committee is hardly any better.

With several thousand Negroes organized in the trade unions, with a Negro Labor Center established in Harlem embracing practically all of the important unions having Negro members, no one considered it important enough to approach these people on the matter of the sponsoring committee or the Congress itself!

At a gathering in Harlem called for the purpose of organizing the sponsoring committee, the trade unions were conspicuous by their absence. No one bothered to explain why. It was simply of no consequence to most, if not all, of those present. When the time arrived for the election of officers, it was none other than the Communist Party members that proposed and supported the nomination of a minister for the chairmanship of this committee! This would have gone through without much ado were it not for the presence of a representative of the Communist Party (Opposition) who criticised the way in which the whole thing was being organized, and pointed to the need for winning over trade unionists for the Congress, thereby broadening its labor base and proposed that, as chairman of the New York sponsoring committee, someone must be found who was much more closely identified with the organized labor movement. He further proposed that the sponsoring committee should promptly issue a call for a New York conference for the purpose of enlisting the aid and active support of as wide an array of organizations as possible behind the National Congress. Although these proposals were adopted, they were conveniently forgotten afterwards. With the lone exception of substituting a trade unionist for the minister as the chairman of the committee, nothing was done to improve the situation in New York. No conference was called; little effort was made to draw in the trade unions until it was too late to do anything about the matter.

In Chicago, the very city in which the Congress is to be held, certain important Negro trade unionists have categorically refused to have anything to do with either the local sponsoring committee or the Congress itself because of the prominent place given to notorious labor-haters and company-unionists! Perhaps, had the approach been made directly to the trade unions first, such elements could have been eliminated. As a matter of fact, had there been as much effort and energy spent in contracting trade unions as was spent in contacting ministers and politicians, the Congress as a whole would be on a much sounder footing.

The National Negro Congress, as at present constituted, promises to be a very narrow congress – in spite of all the fanfare. As it now stands, the Congress will be entirely divorced from the labor movement, from the Negroes in trade unions and from all important working-class organizations. It will be largely a gathering of the Negro middle-class elements, and the more unwholesome

ones at that, together with some Communists and sympathisers. Already we are hearing meaningless boasts of the possible attendance of between eight hundred and one thousand delegates. But getting delegates is a relatively simple matter. The important thing is not the number of delegates present but whom these delegates represent!

That such a state of affairs can exist today seems almost incredible. The CP has only to look at the American League Against War and Fascism as a good example of how not to build a broad movement. And why such contempt for the Negro working class? Who can afford to close their eyes and fail to recognise the great changes that are taking place in the ranks of the Negro toilers? Class lines are sharpening. Negro workers are beginning to appreciate the need for organization along economic lines. Anyone who has followed the recent developments in the labor movement must realize this. The tremendous growth of the trade unions has brought thousands of Negroes into the organized labor movement. Strikes have been conducted in which Negroes have played an important part. In the struggles of the unemployed all over the country for adequate relief, for jobs, for unemployment and social insurance, Negroes have been found in the front ranks. The experience that the Negro workers have gained through their participation in these struggles has resulted in the growth of militancy, an increased spirit of self-reliance and self-respect and a developing consciousness of the power of organization. The phenomenal growth of the movements among the share-croppers in the South, in the face of the most brutal terror, certainly bears witness to these facts.

The complete bankruptcy of the old-line 'race leaders' in the face of the crisis, has brought the Negro toilers to the stage where they are coming to rely less and less on forces outside their own ranks for leadership. In the struggle for jobs and relief the Negro has found himself obliged to depend upon his own forces and resources for the leadership necessary to cope with the new problems. Consequently the influence of the preachers and other self-annointed leaders has diminished considerably of late, and the Negro worker views with suspicion and grave doubt much of the advice and warning coming from these discredited has-beens. And no one has the right to attempt to revive this old leadership and restore it to its former place of power and influence. Least of all should the CP bear any responsibility for doing so. Yet this is precisely what will happen unless the present policy and attitude toward these people is changed.

No one should object to the inclusion in the Congress of representatives of the Negro petty bourgeoisie. On the contrary, they are very necessary. As a consequence of the caste status of the Negro people in America and society, the Negro petty bourgeoisie is destined to play a far more significant and progressive role in the struggle of the Negro people for emancipation and in general, than is the white petty bourgeois in the analogous situation. It must be

made perfectly clear, however, that this will depend to a large extent upon how closely these people associate themselves with the working-class movement and lend aid to its cause. Let no one think that the petty bourgeoisie as a class can supply leadership to any progressive movement today. Only when they become part of a movement that is working class in character and is under the hegemony of the working class can these elements play a progressive role.

This is how the National Negro Congress stands today. As a result of the utterly false approach and orientation of its organizers, the Congress as it is constituted cannot possibly bring any good to the Negro people. At best it will prove another elaborately arranged fiasco such as the American League Against War and Fascism or the score of other now forgotten 'congresses' and 'conferences' that made such a big stir in their day. At worst it may become an actual menace, a serious obstacle in the way of a real movement in the future. There is only one way in which the situation can be saved. Postpone the Congress for a few months. Let us all get together now in a united effort to rebuild and reconstruct the Congress from top to bottom, providing it with a firm and active labor base and leadership and eliminating some of the more unsavoury elements who are today sponsoring it. This is the only way out. It is up to those who are responsible for the Congress to take it!



What is What about the National Negro Congress?¹⁷

The National Negro Congress, recently held in Chicago, can now be estimated on the basis of its work, although it must be stated at the outset that certain objections raised before the Congress by the Socialist Party and the Communist Party (Opposition), and resented bitterly by the *Daily Worker*, proved themselves only too true.

Who is Who?

The credentials committee reported 763 registered delegates representing 551 organizations. The civic groups and societies had by far the largest representation, numbering three times as many as the trade unions, according to a

¹⁷ *Editors' note:* this took place on 21 March 1936.

report by James Allen published in the *Daily Worker* of Feb. 23. Others included church and religious organizations, fraternal societies, trade unions, a farm organization, youth and women's organizations, newspapers, educational and professional groups, political groups and parties. Of the latter, Allen explains in the *Daily Worker*: **'Official delegates were designated by the Governor of Pennsylvania, Governor Olson of Minnesota, and the Mayor of St. Louis'**. (We wonder how the Negroes who are Jim-Crowed and those who have tasted of police brutality in St. Louis feel about this!)

Allen gives us further insight on the real character of the congress when he states: **'The delegation from Westchester, N.Y. (of all places! – EKW) was perhaps the most representative of all . . . they (the Negro community) sent 25 delegates, representing practically every institution and organization FROM THE LOCAL TENNIS CLUB TO THE BIGGEST CHURCH'** (emphasis mine – EKW). Since when do communists look upon tennis clubs and big churches as being of such important historical significance in the struggle for social and economic advancement as to hold them up as examples of that sort of representation that is most desirable at a congress that sets before itself the task of formulating a program for the Negro masses? The church is an essentially reactionary institution – and usually the bigger the church the more reactionary it becomes. It can be of some significance only to the degree that it is ready to support a genuine working-class program.

The disgraceful manner in which the congress was fashioned, its composition, and its estrangement from the labor movement led to the creation of all sorts of rumors, doubts, and suspicions concerning the ends to be accomplished. Accusations were hurled against it as being merely another communist conclave. A place on the program had been reserved for the presentation of Mayor Kelly of Chicago, by Robert S. Abbott, editor of the *Chicago Defender*. Inasmuch as the Mayor was sunning himself in Florida, he sent Judge Barker of the Circuit Court in his place. Just as he was about to speak, the Judge left, stating that his 'sister became suddenly ill', and Abbott was 'suddenly called away'. The red scare had been raised. In his opening remarks Charles W. Burton, lawyer, civic worker, chairman of the Chicago sponsoring committee and of the congress, took pains to remind the assembled delegates that they were the 'guests of the city and state' and declared a ban on the sale and distribution of 'objectionable' literature on the floor of the congress.

No Party Control

Likewise others felt that the Republican and Democratic parties also had their agents operating both inside the sponsoring committee as well as in the hall

of the congress. The presence of certain well known ward-healers from those parties helped to lend credence to these fears.

The tension thereby created and the feeling of uncertainty which seemed to enshroud the congress at its very first session made it necessary for John P. Davis, National Secretary of the congress, to attempt to put everyone at ease by officially announcing that the congress was not controlled by any political party.

The congress opened with speeches by Lij Tasfaye Zaphiro, Ethiopian diplomat, John P. Davis, J.W. Ford of the Communist Party, and others. A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Chairman of the national sponsoring committee did not attend the congress but sent a message which was read by the chairman of the session. Discussing the plight of the Negro masses and pointing out that **'practically 99 percent of these people win their bread by selling their labor power in the labor market from day to day'**, Randolph outlined the issues that must be dealt with by the congress, making a vigorous appeal for industrial unionism and urged the support of a **'Farmer-Labor political organization'**.

After the main reports had been given, the congress finally got down to work and divided itself into sub-sessions where the problems of the various groups were discussed.

What Happened to Labor Party?

All reports coming from the congress seemed to indicate strong sentiment for a labor party. The question arose in practically every sub-session, Randolph had proposed it in his message. Ford in his report dwelt at length on the question of the labor party and ended by urging the congress to take a position on it. Finally a resolution calling for the endorsement of a labor party was passed without dissent in the trade union section. But then something happened and the resolution never saw the light of day. The petty bourgeois politicians of various stripes immediately got very busy and succeeded in having the labor party resolution killed in the general resolutions committee. It never came to the floor of the congress for action. No mention of it was made in the report of the resolutions committee and no minority report was given. The whole matter was dropped. Not satisfied with this victory, and as a safeguard for the future, the following resolution was presented and unanimously approved: **'This congress is not AND NEVER WILL BE dominated by any political faction or party'**. This spelled death to the labor party resolution and also signaled an attempt to forestall any favorable action for a labor party by a future congress'. Where were the trade unions during all of this. Where were

the Communist Party members who might have given leadership at this point? What happened to those who applauded Randolph's proposal for a labor party, and Ford's.

The *Daily Worker* attempts to explain it away by saying that because 'unanimous endorsement probably could not be obtained and that certain elements would withdraw and others hesitate to adhere to the congress in the future, the trade union section withdrew its resolution'. Who were these 'certain elements' that threatened to withdraw? They were not the workers – for the workers, you report, passed the resolution 'without dissent'. If there was hesitancy and doubt on this question in the ranks of the workers present, it would have been correct to postpone action on the matter and to patiently explain and educate the workers until they are won for the labor party position. But this was not the case – the workers were for it! It is obvious, then, that the 'certain elements' were not of the working class. Why was this not reported to the congress? If for no other reason than for the sake of clarity the issue should have been brought to the floor of the congress and discussed. But there was no leadership. It had completely capitulated before the self-seeking politicians among the petty bourgeoisie.

Church and Business Dominate

Allen lets us in on something else: 'over in a nook of the floor in the back of the trade unionists, a handful of business men discussed their specific problems'. What these problems were or what these gentlemen decided Allen didn't dare mention. He also withholds information concerning the Church groups. He does tell us that 'church and religious organizations . . . sent over 75 delegates, practically all ministers. But it is worthy to note that although ministers participated actively in the proceedings of the congress, this was one national gathering which the religious bodies as such did not dominate. Each general session started with an invocation and closed with a blessing'. But, Comrade Allen, domination is not always measured by numbers. It is sometimes determined by what a particular group is able to achieve. Now let's see how far the businessmen and ministers were able to influence the decisions of the congress.

The Business Resolution

After coming out of their huddle the Negro business men presented the following resolution:

'The delegates to the National Negro Congress in convention assembled realize the present deplorable condition of the twelve million Negro citizens of America and as a result of a thorough study and minute fact-finding study into the general economic and business conditions in which the Negro citizens of color have been forced, and whereas

'The development of sound and thriving Negro business IS MOST INDISPENSIBLE TO THE GENERAL ELEVATION OF THE NEGRO'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SECURITY, (be it therefore)

'Resolved: That all Negroes consider it THEIR INESCAPABLE DUTY TO SUPPORT NEGRO BUSINESS by their patronage, and

'That Negro leaders should consider it their special duty to set the example of patronizing Negro businesses themselves, and

'That the business and civic leaders of all Negro communities inaugurate a systematic program of education among the Negro population to the necessity of supporting Negro business enterprises ...'

'Just a handful of business men' in equal proportion to their importance in Negro social life, were able foise upon the congress a resolution expressing their own selfish class interests against the interests of millions of black toilers whom they too help to exploit. They wound up their resolution by tipping their hats to 'consumers and producers cooperatives', and concluded with a meaningless gesture regarding Negro employers hiring only union labor. *Members of the Communist Party voted for this resolution* and it was adopted by the Congress!

'Have Faith in the Lord!'

Let us see what the ministers have cooked up, for the problem of the Negro church is a very pressing one in view of the trend of thousands of Negro workers away from the church in search of a more militant leadership and for organization along economic lines. The Holy Fathers presented the congress with the following resolution:

'We recommend that under Divine Leadership and through the various activities of the church, the Negro has received his greatest inspiration in his marvelous progress and advancements. We still feel that the Negro church is the most potent agency to be used in the further progress and advancement of our people. We therefore recommend that the Negro

shall continue to hold faith and confidence in God and the Church, as set forth in the life example and teachings of Jesus.

'We further recommend that the Christian families of the country shall give more attention to the home training of the youth, with special emphasis upon their social, moral, and spiritual obligations.... THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL IS SUPREMELY NEEDED IN A TIME LIKE THIS. We sense a new imperative facing the church for greater consideration and challenging incentives for saving the youth for the church'.

Again, members of the Communist Party voted for this resolution and it was adopted by the congress.

Is this how the Communist Party views the church? Is this the only answer the congress could give to the Negro masses seeking light? Where were the trade unions? Where were the Communist party representatives that such resolutions were able to pass unchallenged? Must the Communist Party swallow all this filth in order to appear respectable? Is this the price the working class is to be asked to pay for the sake of the 'People's Front'?

No, Comrade Allen, perhaps the ministers did not dominate the congress – nor the business men, nor the Communist Party, nor the trade unions, or any other single group. But an anti-working class bloc, consisting of the ministers, the business men, the racketeering politicians and their ilk did succeed in forcing through not only the defeat of the only progressive working class resolutions, but also succeeded in bludgeoning the few trade unionists and the party members that were present, and the congress as a whole, into endorsing resolutions supporting the church and Negro business as aids in the solution of the problems of the Negro masses.

Proletarian Spirit Throttled

By these acts, the congress has practically eliminated every vestige of proletarian spirit from its program and by these resolutions it has created a wall between itself and the rest of the organized labor movement. The congress went on record as favoring certain resolutions which had absolutely no place in any gathering where working class organizations are represented and certainly not where communists are represented without the most vigorous opposition.

The congress passed some worthwhile resolutions no one will deny. It endorsed resolutions condemning the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia, against war and fascism, for old age pensions, for the rights of women, youth, etc. The resolutions dealing with lynchings, civil liberties, and even the organization

of Negroes into trade unions can be considered as 'must' resolutions. What gathering would dare meet without passing such resolutions? The congress endorsed the Wagner-Costigan anti-lynching bill, but so has the N.A.A.C.P., the Urban League, and various ministerial groups. What is significant is that the congress defeated resolutions of a specifically working class nature that attempted to go beyond this adopted others that would cause some of the organizations that make little or no pretence at liberalism to shudder.

This is the logic of the 'People's Front' policy. These are the fruits of unprincipled horse trading and compromises which ultimately lead to an anti-working class position.

This is a policy that must be repudiated by all class-conscious workers and by all members of the Communist Party.



Once again the National Negro Congress¹⁸

Pronouncements are abroad heralding the second gathering of the National Negro Congress. The first congress was held in Chicago in February 1936 and was arranged in a fashion that has become quite familiar to us all.

With control centered completely in the hands of the Communist Party, the congress was to be one of the newer models of the all-class political monstrosities commonly referred to as the 'People's Front'. And in this respect, it did not miss its mark. Delegates representing 'practically every institution from the local tennis club to the biggest church' (*Daily Worker*), gathered together and Negro 'People's Front' was launched.

No trade unions or working-class organizations, except those dominated by the Communist Party, were represented at the congress. Although A. Phillip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters gave his personal endorsement and permitted the use of his name in connection with the congress, his union did not participate.

Preachers and lawyers, Democratic and Republican ward-healers, notorious labor-haters and company unionists, corrupt middle-class leeches and self-seeking politicians, elements whom the Negro masses had long since discarded, were dragged from their haunts by the Communist Party, dusted off

¹⁸ *Editors' note:* this took place on 16 October 1937.

and trotted out before the Negro masses to be hailed as leaders. But the Negro masses would have none of these and the hopeless fiasco died aborning.

Significant Features of the First Congress

In preparation for the Chicago Congress a year and a half ago, the political sorcerers who people the haunted house on Thirteenth Street and who find it expedient these days to draw upon the dead past, decided to solicit the aid of the spooks. They wanted to summon up the ghost of Frederick Douglass, the great Negro Abolitionist; they felt that, with the spirit of Douglass stalking through the corridors of the congress, there might be aroused some semblance of militancy and progressivism. But something went wrong. Douglass was not there or, if he was, then certainly nobody recognised him. Instead of Douglass, the congress was darkened by the shadows of Booker T. Washington!

Brushing aside the fanfare attending its opening, and examining what the congress actually achieved, we find not militancy but supine submission – not progress but confusion and retrogression. If one is to judge from some of the resolutions it produced, the congress marked a distinct victory for reaction.

Refusing to take its cue from the aims and aspirations of the advancing Negro proletariat, the working farmers and the unemployed who constitute about ninety-five percent of the Negro population, the congress gave expression to the interests of an ever-diminishing group of middle-class parasites by 'wholeheartedly endorsing' Negro business and the Negro church!

A Phillip Randolph, who did not attend the Chicago congress but sent a message read by the chairman at one of the sessions, made a vigorous appeal for industrial unionism and urged support of a 'farmer-labor political organization'. This might well have been the keynote of the entire congress. But was it?

Of course, the congress adopted resolutions condemning the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia, against war and Fascism, for the rights of women and youth, etc. Its declarations against lynching, for civil liberties and even the organization of Negroes into trade unions are all 'must' resolutions. What gathering would dare meet without passing such statements? But pressure from the politicians caused the defeat of a labor party resolution, the only resolution of a specifically working-class nature that might have registered a mark of progress for the Congress. At the same time, however, it lost no time in passing two other resolutions which not only added to the general confusion already existing among Negroes but tended to off-set whatever good effects the other resolutions might have had. The one on Negro business held 'that the development of sound and thriving Negro business is most indispensable to the

general elevation of the Negro's social and economic security', and resolved 'that all Negroes consider it their inescapable duty to support Negro business'.

The Negro Church and the People

It is well known that the Negro church is one of the mainstays of white supremacy in the South and of capitalist reaction generally among Negroes. Yet the Congress felt 'that the Negro church is the most potent agency to be used in the further progress and advancement of our people' and recommended 'that the Negro shall continue to hold faith and confidence in God and the church. . . . The power of the gospel is supremely needed in a time like this'.

So, with this as a program, the Congress ended and the spirit that was borrowed made its way back to its celestial abode and carried along with it the spirit of that which was born on the cold, bleak shores of Lake Michigan – and had died there! The delegates returned to their homes, leaving John P. Davis the Secretary, and the Communist Party to care of what was left of the carcass.

The Ghost Goes East

This time the ghost goes east. The second National Negro Congress will convene in Philadelphia, 'the cradle of liberty', according to the sponsors. And Thirteenth Street is again up in the air, communicating with spooks, although probably with far less difficulty. Better relations have been established with the Great Beyond which, of course, would facilitate matters.

The central theme and take-off point of the second Congress is – the church. To begin with, the patron-saint of the Philadelphia Congress is to be the ghost of Bishop Richard Allen, whose only claim to fame lies in the fact that, in 1787, he and a group of Negroes left a white Methodist church in Philadelphia and later founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church, becoming its first bishop!

Then, in a leaflet issued in the name of the Congress, we are treated to the following:

Today, the National Negro Congress hails the Negro church and its great present-day leaders not alone for what the great leaders of the past have contributed, but even more because the Negro church, as the largest and most highly organized institution among Negroes, is most adequately equipped to carry on the struggle for freedom and independence than

any other institution yet developed by Negroes. . . . In this new day, this remarkable twentieth-century era of enlightened economy and social relations, the Negro church becomes increasingly aware of the great role it must continue to play. Hail the great leaders of the Negro church! . . . Let freedom ring! And may the new liberty-bell sound out from every church belfry in our land.

The Church Hailed as Saviour

If Negroes were to act upon such a conception, they would have to turn their backs to the trade unions, repudiate all working-class organizations and embrace the Negro church as the instrument that will 'carry on the struggle for freedom and independence'. The Negro church is being endowed with virtues that it itself never claimed. Exposing the true role of the Negro church in the Negro community, tearing the veil of ignorance and religious superstition from the eyes of the Negro masses, are some of the things that the Communist Party might be doing instead of clamping down the shackles more tightly. It would be far more helpful to point out that the salvation of the Negro people in this country lies along the working-class road. Instead, we here find the Communist Party grovelling in the dust at the feet of the middle class, begging to be accepted. If this is the path which the Communist Party has chosen to follow, we must do all in our power to see to it that it traverses that path alone.

Prospects of the Second Congress

The second Congress promises to be a gathering of elements of the same stripe that dominated the last one. Encouraged by their previous 'success', the politicians, ministers and businessmen will all come flocking again to air their reactionary and anti-labor views and then utilise the Congress to give themselves some substance. The fact that a sprinkling of Communist Party members will attend will not alter this situation. A Party that declares itself for the protection of American imperialist interests in China and endorses a Klansman for a post in the judiciary can be expected to follow along these lines at the Congress. For the sake of 'unity', the Communist Party can be relied upon to agree to anything.

Trade unions are being asked to send delegates. Very few will, because no trade union with any amount of decency or self-respect would participate in such a disgraceful affair. Those that do participate will be the unsuspecting

victims of Communist Party machinations, with no knowledge of the real nature of the Congress, or else they will be delegates from unions directly under Communist Party control.

Bishops and politicians are not the natural leaders of the Negro masses. Nor can they become so even with the backing of the National Negro Congress and the Communist Party. A new day is dawning for the Negro toilers and, with it, there emerges a new type of leadership, a leadership that has its roots in the trade-union movement, in the organizations of the share-croppers and the unemployed. A hundred thousand organized Negro workers are a much more socially significant factor in rushing forward a program for the betterment of Negroes as a whole than all the churches this side of hell!

No real and effective movement can develop out of the Congress. It cannot and will not be of any positive value as a factor for Negro advancement. To the extent that it does wield any influence, it can merely serve as an obstacle in the way of organizing a real movement.

The Future of the Negro is with Labor!

Under the conditions of modern capitalism, any movement to be really progressive in its direction and really effective in its results must be basically a movement of labor or rooted primarily in the trade unions and mass organizations of the working class, with the support of all other elements who are willing to back up its program.

This is as true of a National Negro Congress as it is of any other movement that is serious about its intentions. The moment that this basic fact is ignored or misunderstood, such a movement can lead only to sterility or worse.

The future of the Negro working men and women is linked up with the onward march of labor under the banner of the CIO. This is the direction in which the Negro must travel. Once organized as an integral part of the labor movement, the Negro will eventually win that genuine equality that only working-class progress can secure.

9. The Economic Position of the Negro and its Effects on White Workers¹⁹

Lyman Fraser

The unusually oppressive economic conditions under which the Negro lives is an old story. But it is a story that must be retold to nail down its significance. It must be retold, especially as new material is unearthed, to explore the many-angled relation of the Negro to the American class struggle.

Revealing new material is being unearthed in a study of family incomes and expenditures now being carried on by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. The study covers the year 1935–6. According to the preliminary results in six cities, a staggeringly larger proportion of Negro families than white families are in the low-income groups.

Percentage of families with yearly incomes below \$1,000

	Negro	White
Columbus, Ohio	78.7	26.6
Atlanta, Ga.	81.1	24.8
Columbia, S.C.	86.4	22.3
Mobile, Ala.	89.8	33.3
Albany, Ga.	92.1	27.9
Gastonia, N.C.	92.2	45.8

19 *Workers Age*, 4 September 1937, p. 4.

The proportion of Negro families with total family incomes from all sources (including relief) of less than one thousand dollars yearly ranged from a low of 78.7 percent in the Northern city of Columbus, Ohio, where the Negro is 'better off' than in the South, to a high of 92.2 percent in Mobile, Ala. For all six cities, 83 percent of the Negro families had incomes of less than one thousand dollars compared with 27 percent of the white families.

No family, black or white, can live in cities under conditions of minimum decency where the total yearly income is below one thousand dollars. Still worse, seven out of ten Negro families must live on less than seven hundred and fifty dollars yearly. It cannot be done in the North. It cannot be done in the South despite the Congressional and other hypocrites who argue that low wages are justified in the South because God has made it possible to live more cheaply in those blessed regions. Differences in cost of living are small; if workers in the South live on less it is because they live less.

The income figures clearly reveal, not only the poverty that grinds down the Negro, but the special racial exploitation to which he is subject, since low incomes among Negro families are from two to four times as numerous as among white families.

It must be recognised that the terrible racial exploitation of the Negro helps to move many white families to higher income levels.

This is not only true of the upper classes. It is also true of the petty exploiters of labor, industrial and commercial, who want low wages, and of many middle-class families who hire Negro servants for a pittance while the lady of the house plays the *grande dame*.

Effect on White Workers

But it must also be recognised that the exploitation of the Negro primarily benefits the upper classes and that it helps to keep down wages, salaries and incomes generally among the masses of white people, especially the workers. While there is a large differential between the proportion of white and Negro families in the low-income groups in the six cities, the proportion of white families in the low-income groups is not much smaller than the national average.

In twenty-eight cities surveyed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the proportion of white families with incomes below one thousand dollars was 32 percent. If one looks at the figures in the table, one sees that in four cities the percentage of low-income white families was not much lower than the national average, it was about the same in Mobile and 50 percent higher in Gastonia.

For the six cities as a whole, 27 percent of the white families had incomes below one thousand dollars compared with the 32 percent national average. And it is significant to note that, in the six cities, the absolute number of low incomes in the two racial groups was about equal: there were thirteen thousand seven hundred and fifty white families getting incomes below one thousand dollars yearly compared with thirteen thousand nine hundred and twenty-six Negro families. The condition of those 'poor whites' was not improved by exploitation of the Negro.

The terrible meaning of those low incomes to the Negro people is illustrated in the blighted slum-areas of Birmingham. In those slum-areas, where the population is mainly black, infant-mortality is 20 percent higher than the city-average, reportable diseases are 65 percent higher and deaths 36 percent higher.

Yet one out of every seven persons living in those blighted slum-areas is white; that one is multiplied to include seven thousand five hundred persons or fifty-nine of Birmingham's white population. And there are slums inhabited exclusively by whites.

Toilers have Common Enemy

The recoil of Negro exploitation upon the white toilers appears most clearly on the farms. Negro exploitation is undoubtedly a major cause of the backward condition of Southern agriculture. Independent white farmers, except the minority of substantial owners, are not much better off than Negro farmers.

That is still more true among the share-croppers: a recent government survey revealed that in North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi and Georgia, 64 percent of the white croppers and 72 percent of the Negro croppers had yearly incomes of only two hundred and fifty to five hundred dollars. The differential in favor of the white croppers is so small as to be practically insignificant; the important thing is that neither the white cropper nor the Negro cropper can live humanly with those incomes. The Negro suffers most, but the others suffer too.

In the final analysis, Black and white are, alike, exploited by a system that uses racial prejudices and racial antagonisms to consolidate and preserve exploitation. The most elementary need of the class struggle in the South is the realization by white workers, farmers and croppers that the enemy of the Negro is their enemy and must be destroyed.

10. New Problems for Negro Labor²⁰

Ernest Calloway

During the past nine years of the economic crisis in the United States, we have witnessed many transitions and changes. One of the most hopeful is that of the Negro and his outlook and approach to his problems, his problems as a worker, a consumer, a voter and self-respecting member of American society.

Prior to 1929, the Negro problem rested securely in the hands of the Rockefeller-controlled General Education Fund, the Rosenwald Fund and the financially and politically controlled inter-racial commissions. The only challenge to this type of domination had come from the advent of the 'uncouth showman', Marcus Garvey, and his 'Back-to-Africa' movement. The escapist philosophy of this movement probably aroused more Negroes in this country. The secret of the success of the Garvey movement can be traced to the unadulterated chauvinism and racial glorification which was turned on with full steam ahead. Although secondary, there were economic implications based on the unsound theory of economic isolation or the building of a separate, self-sustaining 'black' capitalist economy outside the general framework of modern finance capitalism.

Rise and Fall of Garveyism

Garveyism failed because of the inherent weakness of any escapist movement or philosophy. No mass movement can possibly succeed without a deep consideration and examination of the broad social and economic forces of modern capitalist society. In any racial movement, conflict will inevitably arise. Class interest will assert itself over racial interest. The fundamental division in any capitalist society, whether black, white, yellow or all-inclusive, is class division and not racial division.

²⁰ *Workers Age*, 16 July 1938, p. 3.

With the failure of Garveyism, the movement slowly petered out and again big business set the pace and fashion of Negro thought in America. Entering the Depression, the Negro was certainly subjected to much lower and degrading standards of living than any other group. Mass resentment took the form of a revolt against the clique, which had so long determined Negro attitudes and reactions towards social and economic problems.

The year 1932 found the Negro making his first break with the Republican Party. This disturbance in traditional Negro politics was not really felt or any effort made to analyse it until four years later, after the Negro as a group had completely repudiated the Party he had supported for generations. In this process, the Negro to some extent developed a greater degree of social and economic consciousness which caused the revolt against the entrenched reactionary thought of the so-called 'race leaders' and their bosses.

As far as any definite line of activity of Negroes is concerned, our organization has been altogether too weak in this respect. We have maintained a very clear, wholesome position on the Negro question, but that position has been applied to a very limited extent to the field of everyday action. We have exposed the incorrectness of the 'self-determination' of the Negro in the black-belt: theory, as advanced by the American Communist Party. The National Negro Congress, with its hideous attempt to emasculate the growing labor consciousness of the Negro worker, has very properly been rejected by us and by the responsible sections of the American labor movement. But, until recently, we ourselves did not do anywhere near what we might have in the right direction.

Towards a Program of Action

I want to raise a number of points that might help towards a program of action. At no other point in the entire history of the American trade-union movement has the problem of Negro integration had such a chance of being approached with any degree of clear understanding as in the period we are now passing through. The reduction of both Negro and white labor to the lowest common denominator of present-day industrialization, the impersonal attitude of big business in presenting a united front against both Negro and white unionists, the dim realization that all living standards are affected by the same system of exploitation, and the beginning of a healthy desire to submerge prejudice in order to wage a common war against a common enemy, are all signs in the same direction.

In the face of these new developments, how are we to utilise these changing attitudes towards creating a permanent basis for inter-racial labor solidarity?

There are two decisive factors favorable to those working within the CIO towards cementing race relations in the American labor movement. The movement for industrial unionism arose from a definite historical development of American industry and economy, and had within itself the necessary factors for the creation of greater racial labor solidarity. The base and leadership of the movement are utterly devoid of any racial complexes, and any infiltration of prejudices is foreign to the aims, ideas and desires of the leadership.

The Negro and the CIO

The basic problem here is the building of a genuine collective leadership of Negro workers, which will go far in breaking the influence and domination of anti-labor forces and institutions in the Negro community. The work of the United Automobile Workers and the International Ladies Garment Workers is a very healthy beginning in this direction. The UAW, especially in the formation of its Negro department, occupies an outstanding position in approaching the problems of working-class race relations. Here, the problem is, and must be, approached with a greater degree of determination and foresight than in the past. It would be greatly to the advantage of the CIO that some coordinating body, council or committee be established to deal with these problems in a realistic and intelligent fashion – thereby moving into a position to strengthen labor's inter-racial cooperation and, at the same time, waging a concerted educational campaign against prejudice, Jim Crowism and other evils flowing from racial misunderstanding, within the main body of the organized labor movement.

It is necessary also to take an active part in the legislative campaign against lynching. While there are a number of shortcomings in the present campaign as conducted by the NAACP, it is necessary to strengthen the movement. We know that lynching, vigilantism, etc. are not going to be eradicated solely through legislative action. But, in the process of activizing the Negro masses against these evils, our organization will slowly gain the respect and confidence of the Negro masses, thus paving the way for broader work in this direction.

Although the most persecuted and exploited racial group, the Negro is by far the most patriotic. He is very susceptible to war propaganda. To many Negroes, war is the easy way out. War appears as a great escape from the discrimination, low wages, unemployment, poor housing and the humdrum of a sub-standard existence. Conditioned by years of oppression, the Negro is easy prey for the 'glory' and 'save democracy' propaganda of the warmongers. Today, certain sections of the Negro press close to the Roosevelt Administration have

joined in the war-hysteria campaign now being carried on in this country. Intensification of anti-war work among Negroes through the Keep America Out of War Committee should get under way at once.

Anti-Semitism among the Negroes

The growing anti-Semitism in the Negro urban communities presents a very serious problem. Chicago offers us a serious warning: on the South Side, there is a very sharp fight going on between Negro businessmen and white businessmen, a large percentage of whom are Jewish. Negro business is built and exists solely upon racial consciousness. To the Negro businessman, racial consciousness has its dollars-and-cents value.

In fighting Jewish merchants, the Negro middle class deliberately aroused racial prejudice. The campaign on Chicago's South Side is very intense. With the publication of an anti-Semitic sheet, passions are running very high among the Negro masses against all Jewish people. In the heat of prejudice, no consideration is given to the fact that Jewish workers suffer the same fate as Negro workers, and at the hands of Jewish capitalists as well. This problem is a very delicate one, and must be approached with tact, intelligence and a clear understanding of the forces at play.

Trade-Union Movement



11. Problems and Tasks Facing the American Labor Movement²¹

Jay Lovestone

Six decisive problems face the American proletariat today. We have no blueprint analysis or solution. We do not announce with thunder on the right or left the calendar-date for our goal. But we do see a definite trend in the working-out of these problems.

Organization of the unorganized: the first task before the American working class is organizing the unorganized. Less than 10 percent of the American working class is today organized in trade unions of any character. To the extent that the Communists and other progressive and left-wing forces in the labor movement learn to link up constructive work inside existing conservative trade unions with well-prepared efforts for organizing great masses of unorganized and semi-skilled workers, will they solve this problem. The Communists alone are not strong enough to organize the unorganized. The Communists and the left-wing forces must learn to utilise the existing trade unions for the purpose of drawing more workers into these organizations as well as setting up new unions in fields where none exists today. These new unions will have to be *not* dual, not competitive organizations, but new bodies added to the main trade-union force of the country, the American Federation of Labor.

These new forces will add new blood, fresh fighting ranks to the mainstream of the American labor movement. Only by organizing the unorganized, today 90 percent of the working class, can the labor and Communist movements grow in vitality, enlarge their perspective, and be strong enough to improve day-by-day working and living conditions and fight through to a new social order. All this obviously will come *despite of and not because of* the present reactionary leadership of the American Federation of Labor.

21 Lovestone 1932, pp. 13–17.

In the United States, unlike Europe, we face the task of organizing great bodies of unorganized workers *after* trustification has already been largely completed. Our efforts must proceed with careful and thorough preparation based on an understanding of the special conditions and problems in each industry. Communists should seize every opportunity to set an example of initiative and practical effort, but in giving such leadership the Communists will have to learn to show less of their face and rather have more of their hand felt. The role of the Communists should be to inspire and guide instead of bossing, even at the risk of having nothing to write 'home' about.

Winning the Negro toilers: Closely bound up with the question of organizing the unorganized is the task of drawing the Negro workers into the labor movement. This task has a significance which transcends the color line. An unorganized worker, white or black, is a more easy prey to the greed of the exploiters and perforce undermines the standards achieved by those organized. This is especially true of Negro workers because the employers are quick to utilise all race prejudice and to pit one worker against the other in industrial struggles. The Negro has become a primary factor in American industry since the great migrations of Negro masses northward and the rapid industrialization of the South following the World War. As industrialization proceeds and large-scale industry is extended, the Negro laborer will assume ever-greater importance in the economic life of the country.

Particularly under these conditions is it suicidal for the trade-union movement to continue its hostility to the organization of the Negroes. The definitely anti-Negro position of the national officialdom of the AF of L, its persistent opposition to equal rights is as much a menace to the white as to the black workers. So long as any group of unorganized workers is excluded from unionization, there is no hope for the effective general organization of the great mass of the unorganized.

It is the writer's opinion that the most practical program is for the Negroes, in certain cases, to form their own unions, unions of Negro workers. Then, the organized resources of such Negro unions can the more readily be utilised through strikes, for merging and uniting with all workers regardless of color, for cooperation with other unions in labor campaigns and organized educational effort which, along with the everyday activities, will serve to uproot race prejudice and develop one powerful trade-union movement born out of its common travail and interests.

For a Labor Party: As a class, American labor has yet to be born politically. Ours is the only country in which the working class does not have a national mass political party of its own. As previously indicated, it is the task of all

progressive and militant workers to help develop a Labor Party based primarily on the trade unions. The Labor Party should serve to rally and unite all workers' organizations, regardless of individual differences, around the issue of independent working-class political action. This would transform the workers from pawns of the two big bourgeois parties to conscious forces moving and fighting in their own behalf. It is the best way of destroying the corrupting and paralyzing influences of the so-called non-partisan political course of 'reward your friends and punish your enemies' sponsored by Green, Woll and Company and the dead hands of Gompers.

Towards a new strike strategy: American labor faces the task of developing a new strike and organization strategy. To persist in narrow craft unionism in the face of mighty and far-flung monopolies is like racing an ox-cart against a powerful multi-motored airplane. The craft unions must be *amalgamated* (not destroyed) into industrial unions consistent with modern economic developments and structurally fitted to counter the powerful trusts and corporations.

The very nature of American industry today adds to the complications and problems of strike strategy for the workers. The intensified exploitation, mounting wage-cuts, the influx of farmers, Negroes, women and children into industry, the declining importance of skilled workers, the chronic unemployment with its permanent reserve army of no-occupation, are some of the basic and newer determinants of the problem. The consequent sharpening class struggles will of themselves soon induce new strike tactics in the trade-union movement. The limited possibilities of partial (isolated crafts, as turners in the shoe-industry) strikes, will be assessed and judged dynamically in the light of the pervading force of monopoly capital.

To arrive at effective strike strategy we must not hide the difficulties confronting us. First, the employing class is today on the offensive along the whole front. The trade-union officialdom fights the strike as a weapon of labor in the struggle for improved conditions of work and life. The only strikes they engage in are those forced upon them by the rank-and-file in revolt, and these strikes they often mislead and sabotage. The AF of L officials naturally prefer to seek their solutions in conferences with employers in speak-easies, swell hotel suites in Atlantic City or Florida, and sometimes even in the scintillating atmosphere of Hoover's White House. The recent 10 percent wage-cut for railway workers is a case in point.

And because of these and many other difficulties from without and within the labor movement, the only way in which strikes can be successful is by involving large numbers of workers. To achieve this broad base, the largely agitational strike strategy, pursued today by left-wingers and official Communists, must be transformed into practical programs of carefully selected concrete

demands rooted in the specific conditions of each industry. Such demands must appear to the workers as realistic and not fantastic. They must be based not on the employers' readiness of capacity to grant them, but solely on the interests of the workers and they must be limited only by the understanding of the workers involved. For example, the six-hour day would be a highly desirable immediate demand, did it not seem entirely fantastic to the overwhelming majority of the workers in the United States who work more than eight hours a day. Demands, no matter how radical-sounding they may be, cannot be imposed on workers but must reflect their understanding and readiness.

It is fatal to play with the strike as a weapon. Though no guarantee of success can be demanded before calling the strike, there should always be a possible fighting-chance of victory. One of the major prerequisites for successful strikes is, in all cases, to supplement the regular union machinery with a broad rank-and-file machinery, to draw into active participation and management of the strike the greatest number of workers possible. Such rank-and-file voice and power, such extension of trade-union democracy, is the surest weapon against betrayal and sell-out by corrupt union officials.

The new strike strategy will necessarily involve adequate publicity, winning moral and financial support from broad sections of the whole labor movement for strikers, the mobilization of friendly forces in non-working-class ranks, such as the liberal petty bourgeoisie and intellectuals, the building of a strong department for the legal defense of strikers and a commissary department to feed strikers. More and more strike struggles will assume the character of a combat between huge armies.

12. Lovestone Addresses ILGWU Convention²²

(Jay Lovestone, Secretary of the Communist Party USA (Opposition) addressed the twenty-second biennial Convention of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, during the afternoon session on Wednesday 6 June 1934. The stenographic report of his address follows. – Editor, *Workers Age*.)

President Dubinsky: In the course of the Convention you have heard references to the Communist Party (Opposition). The spokesman from that organization is in this hall. There are a number of delegates representing important locals that belong to this group, and, as I stated, while we politically differ and disagree, the fact that this group and their leader, stand in principle against dual unionism entitles him to be heard in our midst.

I therefore call upon Jay Lovestone to step forward to the platform. I want him to address this Convention.

Jay Lovestone: Brother Chairman, fellow delegates and comrades: you have had a sort of jubilee harvest of distinguished speakers and speeches. So far as I am concerned, I will not be able to fall into either category here. Likewise, let me say in advance that I will not be carrying coal to Newcastle and offer you more compliments. Your President has well said that there are many differences between us. Still we are able to work in the same trade-union movement.

With these differences assumed, let me attempt, at this moment, to present to you as a Communist, as one of the founders of the Communist movement in this country, the Communist position on a number of questions which agitate us today. These are questions, the solution of which will determine not only the fate of the American working class, but, I say, contribute decisively toward the fate of the world labor movement and, therefore, of the best part, the most constructive part, of humanity as a whole.

I do not propose to butt into your business. But I say that a number of fundamental questions which may appear to you as strictly your business are strictly the business of the entire working class, of which the Communist movement is an organic part. We have, in the United States, the biggest trade-union

22 *Workers Age*, 15 June 1934, pp. 2, 7.

movement in the capitalist world. We have, in the United States, the biggest trade-union movement next to the Russian, next to Socialist Russia, where the working class rules and does not beg favors.

The Duty of Communists

We, as Communists, and as uncompromizing followers of Marx and Lenin, maintain that it is the duty of the Communists to be the most constructive fighters inside the trade unions, which we consider the most all-inclusive, the most elemental organization of the working people, taking in people of all colors and all creeds and all political opinions.

We say that Communists should, and those Communists who do not, we hope will correct themselves, have the following views so far as the trade-union movement is concerned. Even the weakest union, a union with the most conservative leadership – even a union which is not satisfactory to us, is better than no union. (Applause) And the job of the Communist in the unions is not through name-calling, not through mud-slinging, but through exemplary, constructive, militant conduct to show the workers that the road to complete victory as defended by the Communists is the road which they should follow.

No Stifling of Differences

We do not believe that differences in the unions should be stifled. We say that that organization which is unable to stand having differences is an organization which belongs in the cemetery, and that trade unions do not belong in the cemetery. We believe that the differences we have in the unions are differences that can and should and must be settled through democratic means – and when I say democratic, I do not spell it with a capital 'D' – through friendly, brotherly discussion. No expulsions, no mud-slinging, no blackjacks can offer a solution and a settlement of differences. It is only through the test of life, it is only through the frankest and freest discussions that we are able to arrive at the most constructive policy.

NRA and Labor

You, fellow-workers and comrades, know very well that today you cannot speak of the problems of the trade-union movement without considering the NRA

[National Recovery Act]. Let me underscore at the very outset of my remarks that we are great disbelievers in the NRA. We take the sharpest issue with those sections of the labor movement who think that the NRA is worth a half penny for them. The NRA, at its best, is a counterfeit. We are of the opinion that there should have been no illusions about the NRA. We know the old hag; we can see beneath her powdered wig. We know the old hag with her contagious diseases for the labor movement. We did not have to wait for General Johnson's speech, a strike-breaking speech, at the last American Federation of Labor Convention, a speech which challenges the right to strike. And your President, and you fellow delegates will bear me out that once you take away the right to strike from the trade unions you have taken away from them the right and the possibility to live.

Look at the textile workers. General Johnson gave them a set of professors to study their conditions. It is a sort of splinter from the brain trust.²³ What the workers want is not statistics; they want food and jobs.

Look at the automobile industry. I have just come from Detroit, where the New Dealers from Washington are preparing for a big revolt of the automobile workers, and there, my friends and fellow workers, they have appointed, as Police Commissioner of the city, Colonel Pickert. Who is Colonel Pickert? He was head of the 182nd Division of the National Guard of the State of Michigan, Commander-in-Chief of the troops which shot down the workers in Calumet and Hecla.

Why did they put him up there? For law and order, for peace and plenty – for the bosses!

Coal miners' wages are being cut.

You workers know very well that the NRA is of no earthly use to us unless you can line it up against the wall and get something out of it. And the first thing there, is organization – bigger organization, more effective organization.

And let me say this to you. Remember that Washington DC is the headquarters of the chiselers. Looking for chiselers should be like charity; it should begin at home. DC – District of Chiselers would be a proper term. It is they who always speak to you against philosophy and selfish interests. What is all this? When they tell you about philosophy they are hiding something from you. To the capitalist class and its spokesmen, no matter where or who they are, when they say, 'Do not be selfish', you must answer: an examination of selfishness should also begin at home.

23 *Editors' note:* The 'brain trust' refers to the large number of academics and intellectuals who flocked into the 'New Deal' government committees and agencies under President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The working people are not suffering from selfishness. They are suffering from lack of adequate organization and consciousness of their ability to protect themselves against capitalism. You cannot have a partnership with the NRA. To be a part of the NRA machinery means to sacrifice certain opportunities for the effectiveness of your best weapon, the right to strike.

Menace of Fascism

Let me sound a warning. Through the NRA and through its validation of company unionism the capitalist class is preparing the road to Fascism in a more dangerous, in a more effective, in a more destructive way than through any other steps being taken.

And, at this point, a word about Fascism. I have had the opportunity to see Fascism grow and develop in Germany. I have had the opportunity, unfortunately, to have seen it come to victory because the working class was not aware of the growing menace of it. Fascism may appear distant from us today, but, my friends and fellow-workers and comrades, Fascism is as distant from us as we allow it to be. We must learn from the mistakes of our German and Italian brothers.

The powerful trade-union movement of Germany has today become an underground shell. The powerful political movement of Germany has today become an underground skeleton with the first signs of revival. We in this country must be on guard primarily against the menace of company unionism as the most dangerous source of Fascism. When we speak of Fascism, let us not forget that it is not only Hitler, Mussolini or Pilsudsky. Who knows whether tomorrow it will not be Doumergue or MacDonald in France or in England?

Permit me, on behalf of the underground German trade unions, with whom we are in contact, and on behalf of the underground political organizations of Germany today, to present to you, through your President, the first underground trade-union paper, actual size, now being circulated in Germany, *Der Metallarbeiter* (*The Metal Worker*) This is the condition into which the once most powerful union in the world has been forced. That is the best they can do today. I say to you, comrades and fellow-workers, let us learn from our experiences over there so that here we are not driven into such a condition.

Here are two other papers from the underground movement, one the *Arbeiterstimme* (Voice of Labor), actual size, and another *Einheit*, the most popular word in Germany today, 'Unity' – unity of Communists, Socialists, trade unionists and Catholic workers against Hitler. (Applause).

Dictatorship by Whom?

Much has been said of the fear of dictatorship. I say we ought to drop this bugaboo of dictatorship. When your union dictates a contract to a boss or an association, is it good or bad? It is good. When the bosses dictate to the union, that is bad. Dictatorship is not an abstraction. I think you cannot commit a bigger crime against the labor movement than when you lump together Communism – the working-class dictatorship of Russia – with Fascism, the trust dictatorship of Germany. There is all the difference in the world between the two, essentially the difference in the class relationship, as between your dictating to the bosses as against the bosses dictating the terms to you. We should not confuse these situations.

Let me say we stand proud to show you Russia, once the land of the darkest Tsardom; Russia today is what it is because the working class has taken power. It is the most advanced, the most rapidly developing cultural and industrial country, a country which has already torn one-sixth of the world out of the hands of the exploiting classes and put it into the hands of the toiling masses, and we say to you with all the energy at our command that, as the victories of Russia are not only Russian victories, so the defeats of Russia are not only Russian defeats, but are our own.

We have made mistakes there. We are not perfect. We will make mistakes, but with all the mistakes and with all the shortcomings we may have there, let me assure you that Socialist Soviet Russia is the greatest inspiration in the history of the world. It is the breaking of a new dawn, of a new day, for the working people all over the world.

ILGWU Should be in Vanguard

I cannot conclude my remarks to you without telling you that your union, in our opinion, must not only take steps to hold the gains it has made, but must take steps to extend the gains it has won. We pledge to you on behalf of the Communist Party (Opposition) that in any struggle you are in, in any fight against the bosses, you will find our members and our followers first on the picket lines, in the front line of the fights. (Applause)

We ask nothing in return, because your victory is the victory of our class, and therefore, is our victory. We fight shoulder to shoulder with you for decent, bearable, tolerable conditions in this hell of a system known as capitalism. We say a little more than that. Your union, in our opinion, should undertake to become the beacon of the American movement. Your union should undertake

to set an example of leadership and inspiration to the other trade-unions. We may think and we do think that your union is not radical enough, but heaven bless you when you see the other unions. (Applause.)

In comparison with some of the other unions, let us say the photo-engravers, you have actually made a 'revolution'. Of course, I say we are not satisfied. We want your revolution to go more to the left. We are very frank with you about it and we are going to work for it, within the trade-union movement on a constructive basis.

When I say I think that your union should become the torch-bearer of the labor movement, I have the following in mind: you should fight for social insurance. I do not want to butt into your business, but I think trade unions have no business in the insurance business. (Laughter) I think it is the duty of the working people to fight for old age, unemployment and sickness insurance as they have never fought before. (Applause) If the capitalist class cannot pay for it, it is not our worry; it is their headache. Who tells them to rule? Let them get out and if they want or need any help to get out, we can all give it to them. (Laughter and applause)

We say that your union, on the basis of the resolution adopted yesterday, on the reconstruction of the American Federation of Labor on an industrial-union basis, should get down to business to line up other unions. You cannot win the race against the capitalists in airplanes with ox-cart organizations of craft unions. It is an unfair race no matter what 'philosophical or selfish interests' you may be cautioned against. You all know what I mean and what I am driving at.

I think your union is better equipped to do it than any other because you are the most American union in the country. That may surprise you, I mean you are a mirror of America much more than other organizations. You have Negroes, you have Italians, you have Jews, you have Spaniards, you have a labor League of Nations. A little more. Your union is a laboratory of working-class opinion. In your union you have sound Communists and unsound Communists, sleepy socialists and wide-awake Socialists, (laughter) Democrats and Republicans, and so on.

Who is going to do it except an organization of this sort? I think that what you should do is consider these questions that I have raised not in the light of an experiment, but in the light of an experience for the entire labor movement.

Now a word in closing to the new delegates and the members whom you represent. The biggest thing for the working class of this country is the influx of new millions of workers into the unions. It is your union and it will be your union as you become active in building the union. That is our message to you and we encourage you and want you to do it.

Power Must be Used

Power and responsibility!

What is the good of having power if you do not exercise it? Power without exercise is perversion. When you have power do not be afraid to use it. The German labor movement had power and was afraid to use it. Where is it now? You must know that when you get power, as you are getting it now, you do have a certain responsibility to the working class. That responsibility is to fight for it.

We ask you to help us, and we will help you, work together with you, not only for the improvement of your everyday conditions, but for the elimination of all classes, for the elimination of all exploitation, for the wiping out of the present system of misery and poverty. We ask you to fight together with us. We pledge you to fight with you in your daily struggles so that we can together learn in life the lesson of unity for a common struggle for the destruction of the present insane, miserable, war-producing, Fascist-breeding system of capitalism.

(Applause).

President Dubinsky: We were glad to receive a word of criticism from one who does not try to shove his opinion down our throats. (Applause) We have a right to disagree with him just the same as I have a right to believe in the NRA, and Lovestone has a right to disbelieve in the NRA. Just the same as I have a right to believe that the NRA has done considerable work for the workers of this country, particularly in the textile industry, where they have established the forty-hour week for the first time by law, where they formerly worked 55 and 60 hours, Lovestone has a right to believe that nothing has been done. We have a right to come with our opinions, express them, convince, educate, win supporters. This is the procedure of the labor movement, and anyone that expresses himself in that manner is welcome within our ranks and is welcome to our platform. (Applause).

Delegate Rosenthal: I think that was a marvellous speech delivered by comrade Lovestone who has helped greatly to rebuild our union and make it stronger. I move that the speech should be embodied in our minutes.

The motion was voted upon and carried. (Applause)

President Dubinsky: And even on this we have a right to disagree.

13. American Labor Faces the Future

The Problems of Trade Unionism in the Light of the San Francisco General Strike²⁴

Charles S. Zimmerman, William Green

Foreword

The American labor movement is today at the crossroads. It has grown tremendously in the last year, in numbers, in fighting power and in militant spirit. It has spread its organization to fields where unionism had only the slightest foothold before. Its new-found spirit is being manifested in some of the greatest strikes in American labor history.

On the other hand, the obstacles in the way of labor are multiplying and, along with them, also its problems. Company unionism has suddenly developed into a grave menace to legitimate labor organization, while even from the NRA, which many union officials once hailed as the 'great charter of labor', we have learned to expect hardly more than vague promises masking underhand opposition. The textile workers could tell an instructive tale about how the NRA has functioned in their industry, about how the code authorities and NRA officials, including General Johnson, have frankly revealed themselves as spokesmen of the employers and champions of scabs and strike-breakers! The forces of the organized employers have launched a determined drive to slash wages, lengthen hours and worsen conditions of labor – a drive not only to stem the tide of unionism in the future, but even to wipe out every trace of it where ever it has already succeeded in establishing itself.

In the light of this whole situation, the great problems facing organized labor become particularly vital and immediate. These problems touch attitude to the NRA and the employers, tactics and methods of labor struggle,

24 Zimmerman and Green 1934.

form of organization and union structure, ways and means of assimilating the hundreds of thousands of new members into the body of unionism. The future of the American labor movement depends, to a very great extent, upon how realistically and how effectively these basic problems are met.

Apart from the dual unionists who have, by their own act, divorced themselves from organized labor, there are today two distinct fundamental tendencies in the American labor movement – the conservative and the progressive. Their answers to the problems facing unionism at this critical moment are widely different and the programs they propose far apart. It is up to the millions of members of the American Federation of Labor themselves to decide which program corresponds with their best interests and holds out the most for the future.

The recent general strike in San Francisco revealed dramatically this deep-seated difference of viewpoint between conservative and progressive unionism. Because of the very magnitude and sharpness of the struggle, the basic issues appeared in particularly clear form. It was therefore natural that the widely featured declaration of President Green on the San Francisco strike, a faithful reflection of the conservative standpoint, should be sharply challenged by the spokesmen of the progressive tendency. Dressmakers Union Local 22, ILGWU, an organization of over thirty thousand members, has long been an outstanding champion of progressivism in the organized labor movement and it was from the head of this union, its manager Charles S. Zimmerman, that the challenge to brother Green's pronouncement came in the form of a statement issued on 20 July. To this, brother Green replied in a letter addressed to brother Zimmerman and, as a rejoinder, the latter answered in an extensive communication treating the questions involved in detail and proposing, in conclusion, a concrete program of action for labor in its present situation. That this letter is not simply an expression of personal opinion is to be seen from the fact that it was unanimously endorsed by the executive board of Local 22.

Together, these two letters form an instructive survey of the big problems facing organized labor today and of the ways in which conservative and progressive unionism propose to meet and solve them. A study of these documents, we feel, will contribute greatly to the clarification of opinion so necessary today in the labor movement. With the hope that this purpose will be served, we publish them in printed form.

Letter of William Green to Charles S. Zimmerman

2 August 1934.

Mr. Charles S. Zimmerman, Vice President,
International Ladies Garment Workers Union,
New York, New York

Dear Sir,

The statement which you gave to the capitalistic press on Sunday morning, 22 July, shows that you are still the same Zimmerman who opposed the late Morris Sigman in his efforts to promote the economic welfare of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union some few years ago. Evidently, you have not changed. You were reported to be an avowed Communist then and your statements, your utterances and your actions lead to the belief that you are a Communist now.

There is a distinguishing difference between your attitude and that of the leaders of the American Federation of Labor. They believe in trade unionism, collective bargaining, the making of wage agreements and the observance of them. You laud a policy of the workers which means destruction to their organization, the abrogation and repudiation of agreements and the pursuit of a policy which the records of history show have always led the workers to inevitable defeat. The American Federation of Labor cannot remain passive or indifferent when a group of workers, locally situated, engage in an economic conflict which means ruin and destruction.

The facts are that serious consequences are involved in sympathetic strikes. Those who believe in the overthrow of government will favor sympathetic strikes. I say this because of the fact that no sympathetic strike can be won unless you succeed in defeating the Government.

The general sympathetic strike which occurred in Great Britain a few years ago was launched under the most favorable circumstances. It was sponsored and ordered by the British Trade Union Congress. It occurred in a nation where the workers were thoroughly organized. The strike was launched in support of the miners who had been on strike for the redress of grievances. The strike failed and the British trade-union movement received a blow from which it has not yet recovered and the miners' organization was almost destroyed.

The American Federation of Labor believes in collective bargaining, in the making of contracts. It favors strikes when strikes are necessary on the part of the workers to enable them to enjoy the right to engage in the negotiation of

wage agreements. If the officers and members of the American Federation of Labor enjoy collective bargaining and make wage agreements, they must abrogate those agreements if they engage in sympathetic strikes. Those who engage in sympathetic strikes abrogate agreements and thus prevent the American Federation of Labor from organizing the unorganized. Every sympathetic strike undertaken, so far as historic records show, was lost, and the workers suffered set-backs costly and distressing in character.

I am making this reference to your newspaper article because I want you to know I resent what you stated therein.

In this expression of your personal opinion you did not convey the true spirit and letter of the policies which govern the American Federation of Labor. On the contrary, your remarks were subversive and malicious.

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) W.M. GREEN,

President, American Federation of Labor

Reply of Charles S. Zimmerman to William Green
*(Approved Unanimously by the Executive Board of Dressmakers
Union Local 22, ILGWU)*

Dear sir and brother:

The questions raised in your letter of 2 August are certainly of paramount importance to the whole labor movement. As such, I feel they should be discussed in a calm and constructive manner without allowing any personalities or the spirit of recrimination to creep in.

It is not at all a question of what my personal political views may be. It is far more a question of what philosophy, outlook and tactics the American labor movement must adopt if it is to grow strong and fulfil its great mission on behalf of the working people of this country.

I take my stand firmly upon the great principle so clearly enunciated in the original preamble adopted by the American Federation of Labor: 'A struggle is going on in all nations of the civilised world between the oppressors and the oppressed, a struggle between the capitalist and the laborer, which grows in intensity from year to year, and will work disastrous results to the toiling millions if they are not combined for mutual protection and benefit'.

The mission of trade unionism is to defend and advance the economic interests of the workers as against the employers. Such institutions as 'collective bargaining, the making of wage agreements and the observance of them', to which you refer, are only means to this supreme end. They are there to serve labor and not labor to serve them.

Organized labor can achieve nothing for which it is not ready, willing and able to fight. It is not merely a question of striking 'to enjoy the right to engage in the negotiation of wage agreements', as you state. It is rather a question of striking or being ready to strike for every wage increase, for every reduction of hours, for every general improvement in conditions. Unceasing vigilance and unwavering militancy are watchwords of organized labor.

Have not these tried and tested principles been fully justified by the recent experience of the labor movement? Where trade unions have placed their reliance upon the 'good will' or 'reasonableness' of the employers or upon the NRA to shower blessings upon them, have they not met with disaster? But where unions have relied upon their own organized might and militancy, have they not made great headway, built up their organizations and improved the conditions of the workers in their trades?

Is not this the philosophy underlying the American trade-union movement? It certainly appears to me to be the only philosophy on the basis of which labor has made headway in the past and can continue to do so in the future.

Your attitude to general and sympathetic strikes, and especially your utterances on the San Francisco strike, appear to me to be greatly at variance with the true purpose and spirit of unionism. It is not a question of the timeliness or advisability of this or that general or sympathetic strike. On this there may, of course, be wide differences of opinion. But you place yourself in opposition to all general or sympathetic strikes, of any sort, at any time, upon any occasion. You oppose them on principle, on a principle which, I believe, is quite foreign to the real principles of the labor movement.

You oppose general and sympathetic strikes first because they involve the breaking of collective agreements and contracts. But to elevate the sanctity of contracts with the employers to such a point as to tie the hands of the workers and deprive them of a powerful weapon in their own defense, is surely to lose complete sight of the great end and aim of the labor movement. The working people form one great army constantly arrayed against the hosts of capital and it would be the sheerest folly and lack of ordinary common sense and union loyalty for one section to refuse to come to the aid of another, where such aid is possible and practicable, merely because it has a contract with the employers. The employers themselves are not influenced by any such fine scruples. They

are always ready to rush to each other's aid against the workers. We, on our part, must learn the lesson of labor solidarity. Noting the inspiring response of the rank-and-file of American unionism in support of the San Francisco general strike, I am glad to say that labor appears to have a keen feeling of its duties and responsibilities in this field.

May I call your attention to the fact that this alleged principle of absolute and unconditional sanctity of contracts with the employers would lead in actual practice to the most shocking cases of mutual scabbing and strike-breaking on the part of groups of unionists who work in the same factories but belong to different craft unions? Surely you will agree that such practices could not be tolerated, no matter what the abstract principle may be. The unity, solidarity and welfare of labor must be the highest law!

Do general or sympathetic strikes, because they lead to the abrogation of contracts, 'prevent the American Federation of Labor from organizing the unorganized', as you contend? I think not. Organizing the unorganized is not a matter of gaining the confidence and good will of the employers, as you seem to imply, but rather of winning the confidence and loyalty of the unorganized workers themselves. Will not these masses of the unorganized be won to the trade unions more easily if they come to understand that the whole labor movement is ready to stand behind them once they are in its ranks, is ready to back them to the limit where necessary and possible? All experience has shown that the appeal of labor solidarity is the most powerful instrument in awakening the backward, unorganized workers to the necessity of genuine unionism.

Your final argument is that general or sympathetic strikes are no longer directed against a particular group of employers but are immediately transformed into a clash with the government. 'No sympathetic strike', you maintain, 'can be won unless you succeed in defeating the government'. And this, you say, is impossible – 'the government must be supreme'. Hence all general or sympathetic strikes are doomed to failure in advance. But do you not realize that this argument, if valid, would condemn almost any strike that ever took place to inevitable failure? No matter how limited its scope or its aims may be, practically every strike comes into direct conflict with the government once it becomes formidable enough, since the government immediately throws in its forces to help the employers. Every page of American labor history testifies to this notorious fact and every worker knows it by heart. No important strike was ever won except by defeating the whole array of governmental forces, police, courts, militia, acting as strike-breakers. The truck drivers in Minneapolis are not out in general strike now; they are merely engaged in a limited economic

strike. And yet the National Guard is raiding strike halls, arresting strike leaders, dispersing strike pickets, breaking the strike all around. The Minneapolis truckers have come into conflict with the government. What shall they do? Surrender because 'the government must be supreme?' Or fight on, realizing they must defeat the government if they are to win their strike?

If 'the government must be supreme' no matter what side it takes in a labor conflict, how about the time-honored official AF of L policy of defying and resisting court injunctions aimed at labor? It does not seem that American labor always held to this curious dogma that once the government steps in on the side of the employers, everything is lost and only surrender is possible.

Contrary to your contentions, general strikes have been successful in the past, either partially or wholly. I need only mention the Swedish strike of 1902, or the Belgian strike of 1913 or the German strike of 1920. I might recall the significant fact that in this very country the Adamson eight-hour law for railroad workers was won only through the threat of a general strike thrown by American labor into the very face of the government. Nor does the failure of the British general strike in 1926 or, for that matter, of the recent San Francisco general strike, provide any argument against the efficacy of the general strike as a weapon of labor. Neither was actually defeated or smashed. Both were undermined and called off by timid and narrow-visioned leaders who, as a matter of fact, had been without confidence in the strike from the very beginning and had acquiesced only because of the insistent demand of the rank-and-file. A battle that is lost because the generals, having undertaken it against their will, surrender as soon as possible, is surely no test of anything except of the calibre and trustworthiness of the generals!

But the criticism I have of your utterances in connection with the San Francisco strike goes deeper than mere disagreement with your contentions. By implication, you reproach me for having issued my criticism of your statement of 18 July to the capitalistic press. May I merely call your attention to the fact that your statement attacking not merely an individual labor leader but the whole labor movement of San Francisco had been issued by you to this very same capitalistic press a few days before?

Suppose that you were right in your belief that this particular strike was uncalled for and utterly inadvisable. Suppose even that you were right in your belief that all general strikes are undesirable and futile. The fact remains nevertheless, that the strike was there anyway, authorised and participated in by the whole *bonafide* labor movement of San Francisco, by all AF of L unions. The workers were fighting with their backs to the wall against the combined hosts of the employers. Great consequences for the whole labor movement hinged

upon the issue of this struggle. Did not the most obvious considerations of union loyalty decree that, while the battle was on, the ranks of labor must stand solid in support of the struggle, reserving for a later occasion a discussion of such general controversial issues as to whether the fight was worthwhile or timely or wise? But at the most critical point of the struggle, you issued a statement to the capitalistic press disavowing the strike in the name of the AF of L and practically repudiating it. Was this conduct worthy of the head of the AF of L? Is it not true that your statement, spread from coast to coast by all the publicity agencies at the command of the employers, helped materially to demoralise and dishearten the strikers and to confuse labor generally, thus giving the San Francisco employers and the open-shoppers and union-smashers everywhere a weapon against the workers? In this situation, I felt it my obvious duty to let the labor movement and especially the San Francisco workers know that your attitude was not representative of the whole American Federation of Labor, that there were those in the AF of L who had not lost all sense of responsibility to their fellow workers in their most critical hour.

The issues raised in your letter and in this answer of mine are of the most vital consequence to American labor. The trade-union movement today stands at the crossroads. The gravest problems face it as a result of the situation created by the NRA. The policies of class collaboration, of so-called peaceful partnership between employer and worker, which took such hold in the years before the crisis, are now admittedly bankrupt. They have shown that they can lead labor to nothing but disaster and defeat. Today a new spirit is spreading in the ranks of the labor movement, a new understanding of the necessity of aggressiveness, militancy and organizational power. It is this new spirit which holds the promise of the future for the labor movement. The great need of the day, in my opinion, is for the official philosophy, methods and tactics of the American Federation of Labor to be brought into line with this new spirit of progressivism and militancy.

The labor movement is now facing hostile attacks from all sides. The employing class of this country, especially in the basic industries, is determined not merely to stem the spread of unionism but even to destroy whatever progress labor has already made. Company unionism is being feverishly promoted by the big trusts and business concerns with this aim in mind. The rights supposed to be guaranteed to labor by Section 7a are no more than a scrap of paper in the most important branches of American industry. To an alarming extent even the right to strike or to picket is being challenged. Proposals for the police to license or register labor leaders are being raised in many quarters. Only a firm and aggressive policy can hope to defeat these attacks on our movement.

In view of this situation, may I take this occasion to present for your consideration and the consideration of the executive council some suggestions for a program to enable the trade-union movement to meet the very serious situation facing it today.

1. From the experience of the last year and a half, I believe we have learned the great lesson that labor can get nothing under the NRA unless it stands ready to fight for it, unless it stands ready to strike and strike hard.

The American Federation of Labor should issue a clear call pointing this out as the only way in the present critical situation. The American Federation of Labor, too, should take the lead in stimulating a nation-wide strike movement to achieve union recognition, a rise in wages to meet the rising cost of living and to increase buying-power, the shortening of hours to allow for real re-employment, etc. The sentiment of the masses of workers is ripe for such a move and it would bring lasting benefit to the labor movement.

2. The American Federation of Labor must entrench itself in the basic, mass-production industries of this country. The opportunity to unionise these industries is here today, as we all know, but if we pass up this opportunity now, we may have to pay very dearly for it in the future. The coming Convention of the American Federation of Labor should seriously consider the launching of a big nation-wide drive to organize these basic industries.

3. The great advantages of the industrial form of organization are now generally recognised. I would suggest that the next Convention lay it down as a rule that all future organization, in the mass-production industries especially, be along industrial lines. The executive council, furthermore, should be authorised to consider ways and means of amalgamating the existing craft organizations into industrial unions.

4. The AF of L has done a very good service in recent months in directing public attention to the monstrous evil of company unionism. This menace is growing graver every day and labor must make ready for a war to the death against it, without quarter or compromise. Labor should now prepare for a supreme effort and concentrate all forces to smash this challenge to genuine unionism, before it grows too big to be tackled. The coming Convention should issue the call for such a grand campaign. The AF of L should also make clear that it will not tolerate any attempt to recognise company unions as in any sense legitimate agencies of collective bargaining.

5. Never was the need for the trade-union movement to preserve its complete independence from the employers and from the government as great as today. Powerful forces high in the councils of the NRA are trying to affect plans for government supervision of the unions and there are others who would like the unions to enter into some sort of alleged 'partnership' relation

with industry, forgetting that the unions are there primarily to defend labor against industry. The AF of L Convention should make clear that American labor will not tolerate either of these schemes to undermine its independence and fighting-power.

6. In view of the notable and very welcome growth of the AF of L in the last year and a half, it is generally recognised that the Executive Council should be enlarged to include representatives of some of the big international unions. It would be well, too, if this step were the signal for the adoption of measures to ensure greater democracy and membership-control in a number of unions affiliated with the AF of L. Especially should the trade unions be kept open to all workers without regard to political views or affiliation.

7. In order to absorb the many hundreds of thousands of new members and to keep them in our movement, an effective program of progressive labor education should be put into operation in the international unions as well as in the federal labor unions. The regulations of many unions will have to be considerably liberalized, also, if these new members are to find their proper place in the service of the trade-union movement.

8. The hooligan outrages of the San Francisco vigilante bands upon labor organizations and institutions of that city, should be a timely warning to us. From Italy, Germany and Austria, we learn that the Fascist campaigns of extermination against the trade unions were always prepared in advance by just such hooligan attacks upon sections of the labor movement under pretext of alleged political views. The same tactics have been employed time and again by the open-shoppers on the Pacific Coast. We must not allow ourselves to be duped by this camouflage. We must beat back these attacks on labor before they overwhelm us.

9. That the two dominant political parties of this country are controlled body and soul by the employing class, that both show themselves indifferent and even bitterly hostile to labor once they are in power, is only too clear from the events of the last few decades of our history. The official 'non-partisan' policy of the American Federation of Labor has brought us no good; it has, in fact, merely shunted off the political influence of labor into futile and self-defeating channels. A large number of local unions and city and state labor federations, as well as many international unions have already come to realize this and have therefore declared themselves in favor of a new departure in labor political policy, in favor of an independent labor party, embracing the trade unions and other workers organizations. The coming convention of the A. F. of L. would do well, I think, to adopt this viewpoint and sound a call for labor to declare its political independence by breaking with the two old parties and setting up an independent party of labor.

These suggestions, I believe, would find ready acclaim among hundreds of thousands of the members of the American Federation of Labor. May I hope that you will place them before the Executive Council for consideration?

Fraternally yours,
(Signed) Charles S. Zimmerman.

14. Hope of Trade-Union Movement²⁵

Charles S. Zimmerman

Beneath the seething surface of turmoil and confusion, we can already see the American labor movement taking new shape and form, adapting itself to meet the challenge of industrial conditions. The present conflict in the labor movement is no mere clash of individuals but a direct reflection of deep changes in industrial conditions. Modern industry has undergone fundamental structural changes in the last generation.

Large-scale mass production holds undisputed sway throughout the most important and basic industries of this country; old-line craft skills no longer play the role they once did; as a result, the working class has fundamentally changed in composition and character. Yet, until recently, the labor movement had not even begun to react to these developments. In an age of airplane and radio, it remained at the old horse-and-buggy stage of craft unionism, seemingly content to vegetate in the same old rut.

Only Road to Organization

The turbulent months of 1933 and 1934 forced organized labor to sit up and take notice. It became perfectly clear that only a labor movement organized along industrial lines could hope to survive and grow under the new industrial conditions. Industrial unionism had been advocated for many years by the radical elements in the labor movement but now it was no longer a more or less academic question of the 'best' or 'most desirable' form of unionism – it clearly became a question of the only form that could hope to stand up in most of America's big industries.

As long as the great masses of the workers continue to be unorganized and unionism remains confined to a few islands in a vast sea of the open shop and the company union, the trade-union movement cannot possibly hope to

25 *Workers Age*, 2 January 1937, pp. 1–2.

keep the gains it has made or even to maintain itself. But to spread unionism to new fields means to organize along industrial lines, along lines determined by the very nature of modern industry itself. By 1935, the AF of L had come face-to-face with this question of life or death – life through adaptation to new conditions or death through stagnation by clutching tight to the fetish of craft unionism!

Decisive sections in the AF of L, including the more progressive elements and those directly or indirectly connected with the mass production industries, quickly saw the light and initiated a vigorous drive to win the federation to the cause of industrial unionism and to stimulate the organization of the basic industries along industrial lines. Thus was the Committee for Industrial Organization born and the great campaign to unionise the steel industry. The progress already made in this campaign, with about one hundred and twenty thousand out of a half-million workers organized in less than a year, is the best testimonial to the services rendered by the CIO to the American labor movement.

Craft Rule is Ruin

Unfortunately, however, not all elements within organized labor could grasp the signs of the times. The old-line craft-union chiefs, unable to read the handwriting on the wall, unwilling to yield their narrow craft privileges in the interest of all, refused to budge.

Utilizing their control of the Executive Council of the AF of L, these reactionaries did not hesitate to sacrifice the unity of the federation to attain their ends. Attack after attack, each more vicious than the other, was launched upon the CIO and finally, through an outrageous violation of the constitution of the AF of L, ten unions, with over a million and a quarter members, were altogether suspended. The outcome of the recent AF of L Convention at Tampa shows only too plainly that the old-line craft leaders are determined to go to any length in their reckless policy of rule or ruin. The illegal suspensions were confirmed; the autonomous rights of international unions were destroyed by giving the Executive Council the right to suspend any affiliated union and then bar that union from future conventions; the powers and functions of city and state labor bodies and federal unions were drastically curbed – and all in the desperate effort to hold in check, to crush the forces of progress in the labor movement!

The CIO wants unity and peace in the ranks of labor – ‘provided no basic principle, such as the organization of the workers in the mass production

industries, is bartered away for the sake of achieving peace', as the *Justice* has so well put it.²⁶

With all its maneuvers and intrigues, the Executive Council leadership cannot hide the fact that it and it alone is responsible for the rupture in the ranks of organized labor. Its obstinate refusal to allow the dead hand of the past to be lifted off the labor movement is really at the root of the whole crisis, while its high-handed and arbitrary assumption of power to suspend international unions served to precipitate the present condition of industry. The workers will know where to look in fixing responsibility.

Progressives with CIO

To attempt to label the CIO with the charge of dualism, as some have done, is to miss the meaning of the whole situation. Dualism always aims at undermining and destroying the existing labor organizations, at splitting them in order to found a new, 'pure', 'spick-and-span' movement. But the fundamental aim of the CIO is to strengthen and extend the existing or movement, to organize hundreds of thousands of new workers to its ranks – with the aid and consent of the official leaders of the AF of L, if possible, but against their resistance and sabotage, if necessary. This is the very opposite of dualism; it is really the best contribution to the strength and unity of the whole labor movement.

Progressives naturally take their stand without reservation for the CIO. We do so because we realize that the CIO represents the future and that its program is the only one that can bring strength and victory to the trade-union movement. We do so because we understand that the issue of industrial unionism, of such paramount importance in itself, is at the same time the symbol and the center of a new and broader progressive outlook in the labor movement, a philosophy embracing militancy, independent political action and many of the other things we have championed for so many years.

We do so because we firmly believe that the way of the CIO is the way of sound unity in labor's ranks, unity based on genuine democracy and industrial unionism.

We do so because we see that the CIO is showing through deeds how the millions of unorganized workers may be brought into the ranks of organized labor so that the trade-union movement may come really to represent the great masses of the American working class!

26 *Justice*, 15 November 1936.

15. The CIO and the Problem of Unity²⁷

Will Herberg

So I call upon labor to organize – to stand erect – demand its rights – organize – organize here in America. And, after we have organized, if someone wants to talk peace, we will talk peace.

JOHN L. LEWIS, at the recent Convention of the ILGWU

Events are moving with extraordinary speed in the labor movement today. What we forecast a year ago as tendencies of development or possibilities for the future, are now accomplished facts before our very eyes. The power and sweep of the CIO have surpassed even the most sanguine expectations. When Harry Hopkins now ventures to predict that in six months the great mass-production industries of the country will be thoroughly organized, somehow even this does not sound as far-fetched or extravagant as it may seem at first glance. In and through the CIO, American labor is beginning to move at a real 'American tempo' and it would be misleading indeed to try to estimate the present course of events by the traditional standards of yesterday. In the truest sense of the word, we have entered upon a new era that can be judged only in its own terms.

The New Situation and the Question of Unity

The CIO has been in existence just about a year and a half and yet it already counts over two million workers in its ranks, perhaps as many as remain in the AF of L. In fact, the CIO has now definitely entered the second phase of its development. Its original program was to concentrate upon special drives in a few selected mass-production industries, such as steel, auto and rubber. Quite inevitably, through the logic of the situation, it has now passed to the stage

²⁷ *Workers Age*, 29 May 1937, pp. 3, 5.

where it is functioning as an independent trade-union center, chartering new unions, establishing city, state and regional offices, embarking on general organizational activities on a large scale. A new period has opened. . . .

It is but natural that, under the changed circumstances, the whole question of unity in the labor movement should assume a new aspect, giving rise to new problems and new tasks. What is the situation today? There is no use dodging the fact that there are in this country at the present time two rival trade-union federations – the AF of L and the CIO – one with its face turned to the dead past, the other to the living future; one static, with a constantly narrowing base, the other dynamic, expanding, possessed of unplumbed possibilities. All signs, moreover, seem to indicate that the center of gravity has already shifted from the old to the new, that the CIO has already marked out the channel along which the mainstream of the American labor movement will certainly flow in the days to come.

Outside of both federations are a number of unions, some of them long established and powerful, such as the railroad brotherhoods. The problem of trade-union unity cannot be solved without taking these organizations into serious consideration.

That the present division in the labor movement is in itself an evil – although, under the circumstances, a necessary evil – will hardly be denied. Disunity cannot be taken for granted or accepted indifferently, with a philosophic shrug of the shoulders. Ultimately the trade-union movement will have to re-establish its unity. But how and on what basis? Nothing could be more dangerously false than to approach the question sentimentally, sighing and weeping over accomplished facts – abstractly, without regard to concrete circumstances – mechanically, on the basis of eternal, and therefore empty, formulas. Trade-union unity is neither a routine phrase nor a noble aspiration; it is a complex and difficult problem that can be effectively met only by a realistic evaluation of the whole situation and a steady recognition of the new forces at work in the ranks of labor.

Unity on What Basis?

Everybody is for unity, of course, but precisely for that reason the sentiment is meaningless. What kind of unity and on what basis? On this question there are three viewpoints:

1. Unity on the basis of the AF of L – that is, on the basis of reactionary, old-line craft unionism as the standard system of labor organization. Such ‘unity’ could come only through the annihilating defeat or the voluntary capitulation

of the CIO. It would mean the abandonment of the organization of the mass-production industries, the dismemberment and destruction of the powerful industrial unions that have been built up in the steel, auto, rubber and other fields, the extinction of all militancy, aggressiveness and hope in the ranks of labor. It would be the worst disaster that could possibly befall the American labor movement. It would indeed bring peace – the peace of the graveyard. Such is the ‘peace and unity’ so ardently desired by Frey, Wharton, Green and other leaders of the Executive Council.

2. ‘Peace at any price!’ This is the joint slogan of the so-called ‘conciliators’ in the AF of L (Matthew Woll) and the vacillating elements in the CIO (Zaritsky). If it means anything at all, it means capitulation to the Executive Council, for obviously that is the only ‘price’ at which the die-hard craft-union chiefs will agree to any ‘peace’. As a formula for ‘unity’, it is no less disastrous, although more hypocritical and confusing, than the forthright attitude of Wharton and Frey. The utter hollowness of the ‘peace-at-any-price’ idea was quite properly emphasised by *Justice*, the official organ of the ILGWU, in an editorial last December:

There is more than a desire for peace that is involved in this dispute. There are involved in it fundamental concepts of trade union organization, methods and tactics. Such basic differences cannot be glossed over or shunted aside. A peace that would leave such fundamental issues out of consideration cannot be lasting or beneficial to either side.

3. Unity on the basis of the CIO – that is, on the basis of industrial unionism as the standard system, on the basis of the organization of the mass-production industries along industrial lines. This is the only kind of unity in harmony with the fundamental interests of the labor movement; it is unity making for life and progress.

‘Unity in the AF of L was once the slogan of CIO unionists and other progressives’, declared the *Union News Service*, official organ of the CIO, in its issue of 10 May 1937. ‘AF of L leaders destroyed that unity when they drove out the CIO unions. Now the organizing success of the CIO and its increasing power of attraction have made “unity in and through the CIO” the logical slogan of all who hope to see a unified movement of America’s tens of millions of working people’.

The Unity Question at the ILGWU Convention

This whole question was dramatised at the recent Convention of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union at Atlantic City, where the essential

issues were thoroughly discussed in a number of addresses and declarations. Matthew Woll opened the debate. Speaking in his personal capacity as head of the Union Life Insurance Company, he made a tearful and thoroughly unrealistic plea for 'peace and harmony' on no other basis, apparently, than general good-will and a mutual disregard of the issues involved. A few days later, before the same gathering, John L. Lewis, as representative of the CIO, delivered a magnificent address in the course of which he very strikingly formulated the attitude of the industrial union forces.

'Labor in America', he pronounced with indescribable effect:

is now no longer weak. . . . Labor under the new inspiration is on the march and is going forward. . . . I have no desire to interrupt that march or to bring further confusion into the ranks of labor by stopping the work of organization and attempting again to negotiate or iron out our differences with the American Federation of Labor. If the American Federation of Labor wants peace, it should issue some official statement that it is willing to concede the principles for which the Committee for Industrial Organization was formed. The simplest premise upon which peace conversations may be held is to give some indication that the Federation is willing to bargain on a basis of equality and on the basis of recognition of the principle which caused the cleavage in the first instance.

Even before Lewis spoke, Local 22 had introduced a declaration on the CIO, which soon became the common platform of all pro-CIO elements. In this statement, the question of unity was treated along similar lines:

'The reestablishment of unity in the labor movement now arises as an outstanding task for the future. But unity is no longer possible on the old, traditional basis of craft unionism. . . . Today, real peace and unity in the labor movement are possible only on the basis of industrial unionism and a militant, aggressive campaign to organize the mass production workers along industrial lines. The expansion and consolidation of the CIO, therefore, constitute the surest foundation for a united labor movement in this country.

And in the report finally adopted unanimously by the Convention, the same approach is strongly emphasised: 'Your committee is convinced that recognition of the principle of industrial unionism for the mass-production industries is the only basis for a lasting peace in the American labor movement'.

Peace and unity on the basis of the program of the CIO – that is the only constructive and realistic formula at the present time!

Is a Negotiated Peace Possible?

But how is such unity to be achieved under existing conditions? I think it may be taken pretty much for granted that, with things as they are, there is very little likelihood of a negotiated peace on a sound basis. The craft unionist bitter-enders on the Executive Council have not the slightest notion of recognizing the principles of industrial unionism in part or in whole, either before, during or after negotiations. In fact, under their inspiration, the AF of L leadership has virtually converted itself into an agency for deterring the workers from action and for denouncing and obstructing labor struggles, even to the point of openly inviting to scabbery, as in the General Motors strike, or imitating the dirty tactics of a company union, as in the New York Edison situation.

No one should be deceived by the 'grabbing' policy recently adopted by the carpenters, machinists and other craft organizations. It is not a sudden conversion to the idea of industrial unionism; it is simply a piece of dangerous war strategy. It is perfectly clear that, in their blind determination to protect what they regard as a vested interest, the craft union leaders will not listen for a moment to any proposal for unity on the basis of industrial unionism. The reckless splits engineered by them in so many city and state central bodies, and now the mobilization staged at the Cincinnati conference, show beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Wharton-Frey clique is out for a fight to the finish, cost what it may!

The Road to Unity – In and Through the CIO

No – unity is not likely to be achieved through a negotiated peace. The real road to unity lies through the expansion and consolidation of the CIO as the new labor movement of this country. Whatever is sound and healthy in the AF of L will, in the long run, gravitate towards and be absorbed by the CIO, where there is plenty of room for whatever types of unionism are made necessary by the varying conditions of modern industry. And the same is true of organizations at present outside both federations. On the other hand, whatever proves incapable of finding its place in the new movement because it either will not or cannot adapt itself to modern industrial conditions, is necessarily doomed

to stagnation, decay and ultimate extinction. Of course, a protracted period may prove necessary for the labor movement to affect such a fundamental shift of base, a period of costly internal warfare. But was it not in this way that the AF of L itself emerged out of the ruins of the Knights of Labor? Today, a sudden, abrupt transition of a similar nature, a transition to a higher level of class organization, has begun. Nay, more – it is already well on its way! Through what intermediate stages the labor movement will have to pass on the way cannot now be determined, but the goal is clear – ‘unity in and through the CIO’.

16. Call for Unity of Labor Against Reaction (1939)²⁸

Charles S. Zimmerman

(The following paragraphs are from a radio address recently delivered over Station WEVD by Charles S. Zimmerman, head of Dressmakers Union Local 22, ILGWU – editor, *Workers Age*.)

The 76th Congress is opening as there are signs that the recovery movement is beginning to slow down. On the action of this Congress, therefore, depends whether recovery will be further retarded or whether legislation will be adopted which will carry on the recovery movement and bring a measure of better times to this country.

In his message to Congress, the President outlines what in his estimation are the tasks confronting the nation in the sphere of internal and international affairs. It is very significant that virtually the only proposal for new legislation the President makes is increased armaments. Indeed, the President's own statement: 'We have now passed the period of internal conflict in the launching of our social program', carries with it the distinct implication that the New Deal program has come to a complete halt and that no new legislation is intended or considered necessary.

No more disastrous mistake could be made. The President's failure to propose new legislation, his statement that such legislation is really unnecessary, will undoubtedly be understood by the reactionaries in Congress as an admission of weakness in progressive ranks. These reactionaries will be encouraged to proceed with their plans of revising and modifying important social legislation. If they are given a free hand, they will revise and modify these measures to the point where they become meaningless, and whatever benefits they have given labor will disappear.

28 *Workers Age*, 21 January 1939, p. 2.

This condition is extremely dangerous to the workers of this country. It can be met only in one way: it calls for drastic and courageous action on the part of the labor movement of this country. This situation makes it mandatory upon the responsible labor leaders of this country to bring about immediate united action on the part of all sections of the labor movement. The CIO and AF of L and the railway brotherhoods should call a National Conference at once for the purpose of formulating a united legislative program and with united effort and united strength, attempt to get Congress to enact this program into law.

It is possible for labor to get together and agree on a legislative program. There are many questions on which all sections of the labor movement agree. The following program is taken from the CIO and AF of L legislative programs and could well serve as a basis for united action:

1. No cuts in WPA expenditures and employment – right of every employable person to a job. WPA is necessary not alone to help the unemployed but to invigorate and strengthen recovery. WPA employment, even at its peak of three million two hundred and sixty-four thousand on 5 November 1938, was never sufficient to take care of all the unemployed. During the past nine weeks, WPA employment has been reduced by hundreds of thousands. Unless there are new appropriations, all WPA projects will be closed down by 7 February. Congress will make some appropriations but strong conservative forces want to make it as small as possible. Labor demands appropriations of at least a billion dollars to provide work for three million unemployed workers for the next five months.

2. More federal aid for low-cost housing. A national program of slum clearance must be formulated and larger federal appropriations must be made for a comprehensive, long-range program of low-cost housing. This action would not only mean social betterment and higher standards of living but it would also strengthen economic recovery.

3. Federal action for railroad reorganization. There must be support of the legislative program of the railway unions for federal aid to solve the railroad problem.

4. National Labor Relations Act. There must be opposition to all amendments that would impair or destroy rights of the workers now guaranteed by law.

5. Extension of the federal wage-and-hour act. The act must cover increasingly larger numbers of wage-earners and salaried employees, with fuller protection of special groups of workers, including apprentices and learners.

6. Strengthening social security measures. As a minimum, there must be enacted the amendments proposed by the Advisory Council on National Security (a government body composed of 25 representatives of the public,

employers and employees). In addition, other amendments are necessary to enlarge the number of beneficiaries of old-age pensions and unemployment insurance, to increase the benefits paid and to include agricultural and domestic workers.

7. Full rights for the Negro people. Enactment of legislation to impose civil and criminal penalties for discrimination in employment, leasing homes and public accommodations, jury service, relief etc.

8. Federal health program. There must be legislative enactment of the proposals of the President's Committee on National Health. This would be a beneficial social measure and would provide employment for tens of thousands of professional people now unemployed and make it possible for them to use their training for the benefit of the people.

9. Federal farm aid program. More comprehensive and planned legislation is necessary to aid the farmers, to increase their income and to make their products available for consumption by the mass of the American people.

10. Civil liberties. There must be increased and uncompromising protection of civil liberties and the rights of labor.

Let labor set the example now, as it has so frequently done in the past. Let all branches of the labor movement – CIO, AF of L and the railway brotherhoods, representing in all nine million workers – convene in Washington and there formulate and announce to Congress and the people their own program of necessary legislation and fight unitedly any reactionary opposition to this program.

This is the time for labor to take the lead. If it leads intelligently and courageously, the people will follow.

United Auto Workers



17. Flint Striker Tells Story of GM Violence²⁹

Auto Striker

(The following is a letter received from a worker active in the Auto strike, which gives a vivid description of the situation in the strike area. – editor, *Workers Age*)

The company saw a fight was inevitable. It based its local strategy on an effort to play Chevrolet and Buick workers against workers in Fischer No. 1 and No. 2, and therefore acted early in an effort to disperse Chevrolet workers to their homes before they could join in work of the union.

28 December, the company provoked workers in Chevrolet, workers were fired for union activity openly, thus challenging the boasts of organizers that the two body plants would go out if a single Chevrolet worker was discriminated against. The union had its bluff called and had to move both nationally and locally to pull body plants if necessary.

On 31 December body plants at Fischer No. 1 and No. 2 were pulled.

The strike was now on in the body plants. The company used coercion of every brand to keep Chevrolet workers from joining the union. There was to be no talking in Chevrolet plants on pain of discharge, etc. Foremen were assigned to accompany all men at lunch. Men were now discharged wherever the management thought no stoppage would occur as a result.

The problem of the organizers was to get enough organization into Chevy to prevent the Chevy workers from simply being dispersed to their homes and sent against the Fischer workers when their own plant was to be closed down.

Even as the company dispersed Chevrolet, it had its agents organize the Flint Alliance, 'for job security and decent citizenship', etc., a vigilante organization which was aimed to be more than a vigilante organization. The Flint Alliance was to be the tool which would mass the Chevrolet workers against the strikers in the body shops. It was also to serve as a cover for bringing in strike-breakers.

In an organizers' meeting at midnight, the day before closing of Chevrolet, we decided to concentrate on broadcasting (amplifiers) at the Chevrolet gates,

29 *Workers Age*, 27 February 1937, pp. 1–2.

as well as on a series of large mass meetings, street broadcasting, etc. I was assigned with other organizers to Chevrolet and Buick. We began to work on Chevrolet as the day shift went to work, 5:30 a.m. Several thousand workers packed themselves about our broadcasting apparatus, often cheering the speakers. We had no violence, but the police ordered us to quit. We refused and the police were helpless because of the thousands of workers. This, coming after the helplessness of the police in enforcing the injunction against the body shops several days previous, showed us that the police was finished as a weapon of the company. The company saw it too, and we knew they would resort to gangster action next.

At 3:30 p.m. we started broadcasting to the day and night shifts of the Chevy workers, the night shift on its way into the shops and the day shift on its way out. The broadcast amplifier was on the outside sill of a window at our Chevy branch office which is directly across the street from the main gates of the shop. Its more delicate apparatus was inside the window, also our speakers. Several thousand workers soon clustered around the loudspeaker. Inside the Chevrolet [plant], the management had prepared a squad of thugs, consisting of bosses only, to go out and attack us and break up the apparatus. These men were aided by the police who protected them in their escape. They had also a line of cars at hand, purposely stalled in the traffic. Three of us, just from the shop, were standing in front of the loudspeaker when the company hirelings attacked the crowd. There was quite a scramble, a comrade had his scalp deeply cut, I got my neck twisted a bit, and the loudspeaker was smashed beyond repair. Two union men were arrested on the outskirts of the crowd by the police and taken in. They were released twenty-four hours later, after a demonstration in front of the police station by several hundred union members. The union-members showed excellent spirit.

After the smashing of the loudspeaker, union leaders addressed the workers, drawing the lessons of that incident to several thousand who gathered. A rock was thrown at R. Reuther who was speaking at the time. During this we had a defense squad surround the speakers' platform. I discovered one of our women comrades there in that defense squad. Some men urged her to leave, and she said: 'No, I won't'. As I heard someone say later: 'The first Flint defense squad was the CPO [Communist Party Opposition]'. This demonstration marked the moment when the Chevrolet workers began to move in real mass. You could feel their first faint response, but it was distinct.

The next day, with broadcast speakers mounted atop cars, we went again to the Chevrolet gates. It was the last change, because the plant closed with those shifts. Nearing our meeting place, we were once again attacked by the company's gang. We succeeded in driving them off. It is most significant that

in these incidents the attackers were foremen of the plants, forced by the management into this kind of work. The company, which was fast organizing the Flint Alliance as an antidote against the Fischer body workers, was forced to use foremen for that work. Apparently no worker, Flint Alliance or not, would take that job. After that incident, we realized that the effort to turn the Buick and Chevrolet workers against the strikers was already a flop.

The company has now thrown away one instrument after another, finding each ineffective. It has only open violence, strike-breaking remaining, involving the use of heavy details of outside strike-breakers. We have prepared flying squadrons of volunteer defense men, on call twenty-four hours a day. We do not fear just strike-breakers.

A well functioning women's auxiliary is very active in the strike.

Every comrade we have is giving all waking hours to the strike now, and sleeping hours are damned few. The women comrades are on entertainment, food, auxiliary etc. We see each other also 'just in passing'.

18. The Battle of Flint³⁰

Stuart Meffan

If the Detroit section of the Auto Front enjoyed surface quiet (nothing was even remotely quiet actually), Flint had several very dramatic days, which will never be forgotten either by its workers or the rest of the American labor movement. While the purpose of this article is to show the effect of these events on the sit-downers, a little introduction is necessary.

In the first place, Flint is a completely GM town. Its population of one hundred and fifty thousand people lives almost entirely through the operation of the huge Chevrolet, Buick & Fisher body plants. The DuPonts went into the business of building workers' homes in Flint very thoroughly.

The proletarian nature of the town is outwardly expressed in the poor drab homes in the town itself, the tiny subsistence farms on its outskirts and the lack of a fairly well-to-do middle-class neighbourhood.

When the workers in Fisher Plants No. 1 and No. 2 sat down, the effect was as if another Peasants' Revolt had broken out. At first the local officials were stunned and did nothing. Then they became enraged.

Never having dreamed that they could be defied in what they considered their own home, they could not conceive what kind of resistance they were to encounter. GM threw Flint's tiny police force into action against the 'impudent upstarts' in Fisher No. 2. Considering the workers' lack of preparation, a wonderful job was done at the now historic battle of 'Bulls Run' in Flint on 11 January 1937. The police retired drenched and beaten. This writer has listened to two accounts by eye-witnesses of this fight with one deep regret – that they were not recorded, as they were masterpieces fit for the archives of the class struggle.

The National Guard was immediately brought into town. The effect on the sit-downers was terrific. They began to view the fight as one between the workers as a whole and the rest of the world – if necessary. Government became to them not an instrument above and impartial to all the people but something

30 *Workers Age*, 27 February 1937, p. 2.

to be considered favorably if in agreement with their wishes, but to be fought if taking an opposite view. This concept was worked out finally to its logical conclusion in that magnificent telegram sent by the sit-downers of Fisher No. 2 to Governor Murphy in the latter days of the strike. I quote in part:

Unarmed as we are, the introduction of the militia, sheriffs or police with murderous weapons will mean a blood-bath of unarmed workers.

The police of the city of Flint belong to General Motors.

The Sheriff of Genesee county belongs to General Motors.

The judges of Genesee county belong to General Motors.

Only yesterday the judge who issued this injunction said of you, 'to hell with Governor Murphy'. It remains to be seen whether the Governor of the state also belongs to General Motors.

Murphy never in his life has had the issue put so squarely up to him.

The sit-downers immediately got busy and barricaded the plants in very complete fashion. Bullet-proof steel barred the windows of Fisher No. 2 with holes left of sufficient size to allow hose nozzles to be inserted from the inside. Tons of stocks were moved in front of the entrance doors. All workers were armed with such cudgels and blackjacks as could be fashioned out of pieces of stock. Picketing and patrolling on the inside became a serious duty. A workers' army was being forged, and a workers' leadership developed.

In Fisher No. 1 where there had been no trouble, the workers took charge of the street (the main highway entering Flint from the South), while those in the plant dug in for a long siege. The double-cross by GM in the first stages of negotiations at Lansing with the withdrawal of strikers from plants in other cities served to tighten up matters still more. The Flint sit-downers realized that upon them alone was the burden of holding GM at bay. They sat a little tighter.

Then on 1 February the union made a daring and risky move. It pulled the huge Chevrolet Plant. In Plant No. 9, where some of the most experienced union men in Flint were located, it was expected the company would mass its big army of imported gun thugs, stool pigeons and company guards, naturally expecting trouble in such a strong quarter. The union men were to sit down nevertheless and give this mob as great a fight as possible, thereby permitting men in other plants located all together in a group, to sit down with more chance of success. The strategy worked. The workers in No. 9 unarmed except for stock, withstood tear gas, vomiting gas, revolvers and clubs for half an hour. They were finally driven out, but the battle was won.

Hundreds of union men were sitting down in Plant No. 4. While the fight was on, the Womens Emergency Brigade marched up and down outside Plant

No. 9 and, when the tear gas began to fly, did a wonderful job of breaking all the lower windows of the plant, allowing fresh air to get to the battling workers inside. Some idea of what it was like inside can be gained from the fact that almost everyone of the five or six hundred people on the outside were affected by the tear gas, including this writer. This display of heroism by these workers in Plant No. 9 was the turning point of the strike. GM was helpless in the face of such militancy on the part of its workers.

Many were badly injured in this struggle. The thugs seemed whipped from that time on. Some of us patrolling Plant No. 4 were informed by sit-downers that at least one hundred thugs were still in the old hospital in the back part of the plant.

We located them, but could do nothing from the outside. There were many among them armed. We waited in agony. At mere threats from the sit-downers inside they vacated. They had had enough.

Even good wages could not make up for their lack of spirit. They attempted a feeble attack from Plant No. 8, which immediately adjoins Plant No. 4, but an interchange of hose play between them and the sit-downers resulted in disaster for them. Under protection of the National Guard which had now surrounded the whole area of the Chevrolet Plants and Fisher No. 2, they slipped away.

The Chevrolet sit-downers proceeded to barricade themselves in as though to stay till doomsday. They could be a bit more confident now with a force of several hundred men who had been through the fire already that day. However, they prepared to take no chances. For the time being at least, we felt we could breathe more freely. Reinforcements poured in from Detroit and other auto towns, and relieved many of us who had been on the scene all day. Tired but cheerful, we left for home. Though we could not have said so then, we had just witnessed the battle that won the strike.

19. Women and the Auto Strike³¹

Minute Women of the Union – the Emergency Brigade

E. B.

On 11 January the call came into the union headquarters asking that all available pickets be sent to Fisher body Plant No. 2.

The heat had been turned off at noon and food was kept out. A strong picket line including many women was formed. We demanded that the heat be turned on and that the food we had there be taken in. In reply we found ourselves suddenly surrounded by police with gas masks adjusted, carrying sawed off shot-guns, tear gas guns and service pistols. We were unarmed, but realized we must fight or the Fisher boys would be evicted. We held the picket line until gas forced us to break our lines. Milk bottles and hinges furnished by the sit-down strikers, also coal, rocks, everything and anything we could lay our hands on, went flying through the air at those policemen who were not only using gas and sawed off shot-guns on us, but were breaking windows and shooting gas into the plant to force the strikers out.

What really saved us all in this four-hour war was the fire hose used by the boys on the second floor of the plant. The water helped to keep the gas down and being a cold night, the police were getting the full benefit of the water, and were handicapped. War it seemed – shots, screams, men falling and being taken away by other union men and women. Many were hurt, but the police were finally driven off and the boys in Fisher body No. 2 had no trouble getting food and heat from that night on throughout the strike.

Birth of Emergency Brigade

Out of this fight came the Emergency Brigade – The Minute Women of the Union! A meeting of the newly organized Women's Auxiliary was called and the Emergency Brigade was formed as a unit of the Auxiliary. We had to have some way of identifying one another in action so red berets and red armbands with the letters EB in white was decided upon.

31 *Workers Age*, 20 March 1937, p. 2.

On 1 February a mass meeting was held at the union headquarters to protest against the injunction hearings going on at that very hour. We were soon disbanded and sent out to Chevrolet Plant No. 9 to demonstrate against the firing of union members. The Emergency Brigade was standing across the street from the plant, singing 'Solidarity', when a union man came out of the plant shouting: 'They're shooting and gassing the men, for God's sake do something!' A woman screamed: 'Give them air, they're gassing our husbands!' All that could be done from the outside was to smash windows. We were stopped by one of our organizers who said: 'No property damage, we don't want trouble'. We were there to help and air was what those men needed! When we got through no windows within our reach were left intact. The city police was called in. We formed our double picket line and saw that no one went in from the outside to fight those union men who were putting up such a gallant battle.

We Face a Gas Attack

Gas bombs were hurled at the pickets from the inside by the company thugs and shots were heard. Frenzied women jumped up to see what was going on in that plant. One was held up by another Emergency Brigader. What she saw there she will never forget. As she expressed it: 'Hell could be no worse'. A man's bloody, battered face appeared at the window calling for ambulances, and saying 'two of our men are done for!'

We marched for hours it seemed, to the tune of 'Solidarity', which was so necessary at that time. Finally came the call from a sound car – 'Go back to the Pengelly Building – Plant No. 4 is ours – Protect your Sound Car'.

Our next move was for Plant No. 4 where we were to guard the gates while the sit-down strikers were erecting their barricades against any attack from the outside. A night watch was arranged for. Thousands were massed around Chevy No. 4 ready to defend the union men on the inside. Food was rushed into Plant No. 4 for those sitting in and for the union men of plants No. 6, No. 8 and No. 10 who joined the men of Plant No. 4 in the sit-down. National Guard trucks arrived and took possession of the entire area surrounding these plants. Martial law was declared.

Stopping the Vigilantes

Then came the injunction to evict the Fisher No. 1 strikers.

The Emergency Brigade was called upon to do picket and protection duty. The Women's Auxiliary declared Wednesday, February 3rd to be Women's Day in Flint as a protest against the enforcement of the injunction. A street parade and demonstration was arranged for. Women from Lansing, Detroit, Pontiac, Clio, Toledo and other nearby towns were invited to take part, and with their

help we made this Women's Day of the UAW a day to be remembered. Many hundreds strong we marched and thousands demonstrated in front of the Fisher Body Plant No. 1. In that parade were seen the green berets of the Detroit women, red berets of the Flint women and others whose brigades were so new, they had no time as yet to choose their colors, but they were true Brigaders, answering perhaps their first emergency call. We marched up and down, to the front and to the side of the north unit of Fisher No. 1 far into the night. Tired and cold though we were, we felt satisfied that we accomplished our purpose. The injunction was not enforced. But we still had the vigilantes – about 700 of them – to contend with.

During the two nights when the vigilantes had threatened to make raids on Fisher No. 1, picked members of the Emergency Brigade were on protection duty in the strike kitchen across the street. How strange now to think that we danced and sang and thought nothing of it, even though we knew that seven hundred armed men might at any time carry out their threat to 'come shooting out to Fisher No. 1' as they put it. We were only a handful of men and women compared with the seven hundred. And the law gave them the privilege of carrying arms – privileges we did not enjoy. But we women did have pepper – truly a woman's weapon!

'We're in this Fight to Stay'

Our strike is now over. Our battle has been won. The next big job has just begun. There is a union to build, a Women's Auxiliary to organize, our youth to bring under the union's wing, conditions to maintain.

Ours is not the job of Flint alone. The workers of this country will find the women of the UAW in the first lines when the crucial moments come. We're in this fight to stay until we've won our battle for a better day.



A Design for Living During an Auto Workers' Sit-Down Strike

Mary Flint

During the first days of the year when we found ourselves engaged in carrying on a sit-down strike, I dare say not one out of fifty of us realized the enormity of the situation confronting us. To us a sit-down was easy, the men and women simply quit work and sat down, let things take their course until the company

agreed to demands. The sitting down would be a novelty and on company time and property too. It looked an easy way to remedy the evils that were going on in the plants. Then, we learned something – that the sit-downers were not due to just ‘sit’. After the plant was taken, the sit-downers found a task confronting them – the question of food, clean clothing, sleeping quarters, and most important of all – policing the plant. This meant keeping the plant clean, preserving company property, resolving the men into shifts and picketing the plant against intrusion. In the face of inexperience the men inside accomplished this very well as was shown during the duration of the strike.

But there was a limit to what could be done from the inside. The strike could not be won by these men alone. We learned something else. The sit-downers had to have food – and the food had to come from the outside, they needed clothing, toilet articles, etc. The obvious way to supply these things was by uniting all those on the outside into a smoothly working body to supply these needs. A kitchen was set up where tons of food were prepared and sent fresh and hot straight to the men at meal time. The work of the kitchen was subdivided, there were those who collected the food, those who prepared it and those who served it. Necessitated by the great supply of food and help needed, there were more units set up, those who raised extra money to buy the supplies which were not donated. Every person who came forward to volunteer had a job given him or her and did that job well. Whether it was putting on entertainment for a cash admission, or food collection, there were plenty of people who proved themselves equal to the task.

We Discover Our Strength

But this was still not all of the machinery needed to win the strike. General Motors was trying every method, fair or foul, to oust the sit-downers from the plants. The next lesson therefore was the need for plenty of defense on the outside. The call went out and hundreds and thousands of workers appeared for picket duty.

The company-incited riots led us to another great lesson. We had to have some legal help. And the lesson was learned in a big way when several labor lawyers took over our battle in the courts. Legal tricks such as injunctions were tried against our strikers and these were met by our attorneys.

In the last desperate stand of GM, when the militia had been sent in and the danger existed of an armed attack on the strikers, the sit-downers themselves settled this question. The historic telegrams of protest sent by them to Gov. Murphy was the one fitting act that saved them from the terror of the machine guns of the state.

Another lesson – despite the pressure being applied by General Motors, Governor Murphy realized that the workers in Flint had to be reckoned with. The court orders were ‘requested’ to be put on the shelf.

Every known means had failed and GM had to sign on the dotted line before the plants were evacuated. Was this a lesson? And to whom? Well, GM learned as big a lesson from the strike as we did.

The Union Above All

We learned the value of a union, a union clean and honest from the men at the top to the men on the line. We learned the strength of men and women bound together by a union which grew out of the very evils and inhumanity of the force that was trying to break it. We learned that ‘Solidarity’ is not just a song, but a force stronger than even love of home and children, for fathers and mothers said ‘we’ll be seeing you’ and left their children to go out to face perhaps death. Every man and woman who took part in the strike learned at least the elementary problems of the class struggle. It was there, pictured in human suffering, for all to see, and although the sight was not a pretty one, it drove home more forcibly than words the lesson that it must be by our own willingness to sacrifice and suffer that we can someday be free people, unshackled by the fetters of those who would destroy our right to have our just rewards, enjoy the wealth that we produce and hold up our heads and say to all: ‘this is our country, it is granting us all a beautiful life, it is giving us all the just rewards of our labor, to further produce the things our hands and our minds are capable of creating’.

20. The Implications of the Sit-Down³²

Jay Lovestone

Even Congress has been rocked out of its sleep because of the wave of sit-down strikes. The National Association of Manufacturers has come forward with a vicious up-to-date anti-labor program. Congressman Dies has proposed a bill outlawing the sit-down strike as a violation of the Anti-Trust Laws!

Of course, this ranting reactionary never found it necessary to explain how Congressional authority could be so stretched as to cover all the manufacturing operations through such a strike-breaking law. It is precisely the most bitter opponents of the Wagner Act who never raise the question of federal authority in such legislation when it is strictly anti-labor in content and intent. The legislatures of the industrial states are flooded with proposals to throttle labor organization. How many of these measures will be enacted into law is at this moment far from clear.

Law – The Quintessence of Prevailing Class Relations

We cannot underscore too heavily that law is made in the fire of class relations. Legal enactments may be talked about in committee rooms, in corridors and in chambers of legislative bodies. However, the actual law is welded only on the firing line of the class struggle. That is why the writer rejects the formulation: is the sit-down strike legal? That is not the way the question should be posed. What we should do is call upon labor to use the sit-down strike so effectively as to ensure a hearty response to it from the great mass of workers. Thus, the power of the working class can be mobilised to make the right to 'sit-down' legal, to compel the ruling class to recognise it as legal.

Step-by-step, labor has had to fight for its rights. Thus only has labor been able to become an ever more distinct and independent class force. Not so

32 *Workers Age*, 17 April 1937, p. 2.

many decades ago the individual worker did not have the right to leave his job. Soon he won that right – by fighting for it.

It is common knowledge that the act of workers quitting work collectively was once a crime. This right was first established for labor and by labor only at the beginning of the nineteenth century. We turn to John Bach McMaster, the noted American historian, who sheds some significant and timely side-lights on this issue. In *The Acquisition of Political Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America*, McMaster tells us that, about one hundred years ago, when Massachusetts was about to make its second constitution, a champion of the doctrine of property qualifications for voters:

considered it as unreasonable that a man who had no property should act directly upon the property of others. If gentlemen would look to the statute book, to the business of the legislature, or to the courts of law, how much of all that was done would be found to relate to the rights of property. It lay at the foundation of the social state; it was the spring of all action and all employment. It was, therefore, he apprehended, wholly inequitable in its nature that men without a dollar should in any way determine the rights of property or have any concern in its appropriation.

We are further told that:

Another member of the Convention said he recollected that in 1775, the saying was current that taxation and representation should go hand in hand. Take this text and apply it to the men who are excluded by this qualification from the right of voting. Who are they? The laboring parts of society. How long have they been fettered? Forty years. Who achieved our independence? This class of men. And shall we then disfranchise them? I hope not. . . . Though a man was a Newton or a Locke, if he is poor he may stand by and see his liberties voted away. Suppose an invasion should happen – these men would be obliged to come forward in defense of their country. He felt conscientiously bound to give them the right of voting.

Striking for Higher Wages and Shorter Hours Once a Criminal Conspiracy

And McMaster himself could not but comment, as far back as April 1903: "That these men should be content to live under the old conditions of labor was not

to be expected... the first quarter of the nineteenth century, therefore, had scarcely passed when a great movement began in the manufacturing states for the rights of labor'.

Anent this great struggle, the historian tells us: 'Almost at the same time the journeymen cordwainers of Philadelphia struck against a rate of wages which made it impossible by working from sunrise to sunset to earn more than \$11 per week. But the strike of that year was stoutly resisted and the strikers brought to trial in the mayor's court, charged with conspiracy to raise their wages'.

Why, even the struggle for shorter hours was once a crime. McMaster tells us:

Associations of workmen of every sort, demands for a 10-hour day and better wages, and strikes when they were refused, now became a feature of the times. Again and again the strikers were prosecuted for conspiracy. Sometimes, the courts held for the workmen; more often they were found guilty and fined under the common law of England. To the conservative part of the community, these demands seemed revolutionary. Yet, each one of them was long since granted as a right.

Today, these appear as dark pages in a so-called enlightened age. It is not out of place to turn the light on these shadows of the past in order to understand better how to get sunshine today. This goal will be all the more easily realisable if we constantly keep in mind one cardinal truth: in the eyes of the master class it is always illegal and criminal for the oppressed classes, for the exploited masses, to fight for enlargement and diversification of their rights. When labor first launches or loses such a fight, its objective is and continues to be a trespass on private property and, therefore, illegal. Once labor wins such a fight, its demand becomes legal, is written into law. In class society the final measure of legality is not the fraud of existent statutes but the prevailing force of the class fist.

Extend the Right to Picket Inside the Premises

The very right to strike and to organize was first recognised as legal, even in the abstract, only at the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States. Even then this was only a paper right, insofar as the mass-production industries were concerned, until the CIO came upon the scene to give it some flesh and blood – in other words, made it a living right. The right to picket – outside the premises of the employer – is still illegal in many states. This right to picket, which is essential to unionism if it is to live, is circumscribed in all states in

varying degrees. The employing class has never, in practice, granted the right of free and untrammelled picketing in a single one of the forty-eight states. Through devious methods it is skilfully and dangerously limited in order to reduce its effectiveness to a minimum – in order to protect capitalist private-property rights.

Now we are witnessing a struggle by thousands of workers for an extension of this right to picket.

The right to picket inside (or on) the premises (sit-down) is the next one to be fought for and to be won by labor. In essence, the sit-down strike is a form of picketing on the factory grounds, on the premises, to make sure that armed thugs, gangs and scabs and company mobs do not rob the workers of the right to the job. The struggle for this right is rooted in the mass-production industries where thousands of workers are massed in one economic unit, where the employers have their private armies, private espionage services, private extra-legal agencies, and private super-governmental forces.

Private Property and Private Property

All of these rights which we have mentioned, some of them already won by labor, others still being won, still others yet to be won, are in differing degrees infringements upon the right of capitalist private property in its pristine and most unsocial, anti-social or asocial forms. But in the mass-production industries, we have a different type of private property.

The lawyers call it corporate property. Far be it from us to attempt to delve into legal abstractions and arguments. For us, it is sufficient to indicate that a dozen automobile plants, a score of blast-furnaces, half a dozen oil wells and a baker's dozen of rubber factories are not the same kind of private property as the toothpick, the shoe, the pillowcase, or the rocking chair. The former types of private property are means of production of such articles of consumption, or even of other means of production. These means of production are socially used but privately owned. Here is the rub; here is the source of class conflict, the soil out of which springs the sit-down controversy and other issues of similar character.

As a matter of fact, such property (corporate property) is no longer strictly private, even in capitalist society. One need but mention the existence of the Inter-state Commerce Commission. In the case of railroads, and the means of communication, the bourgeoisie as a class has not only learned to accept but have even learned to welcome certain limitations on the privacy of their property in these fields. On the other hand, in relation to the means of production

in general, such restrictions on the privacy of property – in the very interest of preserving the system of capitalist private property as such – have not yet been recognised by many bourgeois spokesmen. But even in private property, in the realm of the strictest private articles of consumption, the privacy of today is not what it was fifty years ago.

The privacy of today in the field of privately-owned and personally consumed articles is very much standardised, wrapped in cellophane. Note the work of the Bureau of Standards. Keep in mind the volumes of legislative acts aimed at fraudulent advertizing and short weights. Why, even, the sacred cow of capitalist private property (shares or stocks) is now 'regimented' by the stock market as an agency for allocating (speculatively but not planfully) capital to industries operated socially but owned privately.

Therefore, all this hullabaloo about the security of, and all the jittery editorials about the dangers to, the integrity of private property in the immediate sense, as occasioned by the sit-down strikes, are just that much hooey. Where the enhancement of the interests of labor is not proposed, there the capitalist ideologists and leaders do not hesitate to seek restrictions on, or regulations of, private property in order to safeguard capitalist private property as an institution. Find the railroad magnate who would today propose the abolition of the Interstate Commerce Commission. James M. Landis, Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, and Dean-Designate of the Harvard Law School, has aptly said: 'But it is banking, insurance, utilities or rail-roads that form the dominating motif, rather than some highly theoretical doctrine as to powers that should or should not be possessed'. Very appropriately, Mr. Landis further stresses that: 'In the field of corporate organization, the stockholder is clamouring for protection against complexity in the corporate structure, against the divorce of ownership from control, against the uneconomic combination of business units into a far-flung enterprise'.

21. Latest Stalinist Assault Upon Auto Union³³

Jay Lovestone

If the Communist Party had gone to school and taken a post-graduate course in the art and science of disrupting labor organizations, it could not have learned as much and could not do as well in this nefarious job as it is doing.

Today, the Communist Party is primarily dedicated to two tasks: (1) to defend Soviet foreign policy as malpractised by Stalin; and (2) to defend the bloody Stalin regime, especially the so-called 'trials' in the Soviet Union. In line with these aims, it is determined to establish a stranglehold over every labor organization. Its policy is outright 'rule or ruin'!

What Stalinism is Out For

All objectives of the American Communist Party, which is now a million-dollar corporation, judging from the financial report of its New York State Convention, are tied up with these aims. Its work in the trade unions, its general political propaganda, its slander technique and everything that consumes its energy, are all organically bound up with, and subsidiary to, these main objectives. Nowhere is this revealed with more painful clarity than in the activities of the Stalinites in the United Automobile Workers. This is confirmed beyond the slightest measure of doubt by the official document of the Cleveland Communist Party, by the instructions sent out by its organizer John Williamson, to all shop and industrial branches in that territory. This document is published elsewhere on this page.

Here is a brazen document which declares unblushingly: (1) 'The only constructive forces in the UAW are the Communists and their followers'. (2) 'Were it not for the Lovestone, Fox and other Martin stooges, the UAW in Cleveland would be completely in the hands of constructive union forces'.

33 *Workers Age*, 4 June 1938, p. 6.

Really, what Williamson tells his buddies here is that, if it were not for the followers and members of the ICLL in the UAW, the CP would have complete control of the Cleveland district of the union. We must not forget that, in this document we are told that 'the only constructive forces in the UAW are the Communists'.

If there is any worker who has any doubt as to what the CP is after in the unions, this document should be an eye-opener. Mind you, official union classes should be broken up. Why? Because the CP wants it so. Why? Because these official union classes interfere with the CP getting control of the union.

And, then, the crime of crimes! The President of the union, unanimously elected by the Convention of the organization, dares to exercise his leadership in that union! If any member of the union 'co-operates with him' in carrying out union-policies, he is 'a Martin stooge'. This Stalinist document even talks the language of the espionage agents of the employers.

It says, for instance, 'Martin operates through that office in Cleveland' (Regional Office) and rants that, 'despite the actions taken by the CP, Fox (the official union educational director – JL) still has some 13 classes (official union classes – JL) going and this must be stopped'. We wonder whether this 'must' grows out of a telegram or a cable.

'Bad Agreements' or None!

Yes, I confess (I hope I am not shot right away) to the theory and – to the best of my strength and ability – the practice based on the fact that 'often bad agreements are better than no agreements'. For instance, I think that in August 1937, the UAW could have gotten a better agreement from GM than in November 1937. I believe that, in November 1937, the union was offered a better agreement than the one recently signed by UAW, known as the Supplementary Agreement. That is why I am today – as I was yesterday – of the opinion that the union should have signed the November Agreement. That is why I believe today – as I believed then, that Martin and the entire progressive leadership of the UAW seriously erred in not accepting the advice offered by John L. Lewis at that time to sign that agreement – 'to take the locals out of the rain', as Lewis said. That is why I am in full agreement with the advice given by John L. Lewis to sign the Supplementary Agreement with GM, denounced by Mr. Williamson in this document.

But this CP document has a sinister sound in other respects. All of the four CP members (or three followers) on the International Executive Board of the UAW joined the rest of the board members to endorse unanimously the signing

of the Supplementary Agreement! Why does Mr. Williamson order his Party members in the ranks to do one thing when his Party comrades in the board of the union do the exact opposite? Is this a division of labor or deliberately planned piece of unprincipledness, a deliberately planned sowing of confusion, factionalism, dissension and demoralization in the ranks of the automobile workers? Merely to pose such questions is to answer them!

Where Soviet Foreign Policy Comes In

But what does all this have to do with Soviet foreign policy and Stalinist butchery masquerading as trials? Well, here is the answer. The instructions to the rank and file of the CP, as revealed in this document, declare:

The reactionaries in the UAW have taken a stand against collective security and lined up with the isolationists in this country. The isolationists are in open and brazen alliance with the Fascist agents in this country . . . the workers are very easily persuaded into believing that the Ludlow referendum is a good thing . . . exposing the hidden Fascist alliance which presses for such legislation as the Ludlow Amendment.

Truly the curse of duplicity and the disease of political degeneration know no bounds insofar as the CP is concerned. In the session of the UAW Board just adjourned, Mr. Mortimer and the other three CP members, or followers, voted willingly, uninvited, unencouraged, uninspired and unconvinced (but not uninstructed) for the Ludlow Amendment, against collective security, for the position of the UAW in supporting the Keep America Out of War movement! Never in the history of the American labor movement has such hypocrisy and double-dealing been elevated to the status of principles the way the CP is doing now.

No member of the United Automobile Workers – with the possible exception of those still taking instructions from Weinstone, Gebert, Williamson, Browder and their clique – has the slightest confidence, believes to the slightest extent, that the CP members on the board of the union or the CP followers in the union really believe in what they voted for or that they plan to abide faithfully even by those decisions that they helped to make through their affirmative votes in the board.

The latest cry of the Stalinites in the UAW has been: ‘No factionalism’. This Cleveland document shows clearly what ‘no factionalism’ really means to them – factionalism of, by and for the Stalinites against the auto union!

Stalinism Menaces Labor

It is an unchallengeable fact that such practices are the essence of Stalinism; they are a corrupting influence in the life of the American working class, a serious menace to the labor movement. This is a toxin of which the American labor movement must rid itself, if it is to grow healthy and become an increasingly powerful and finally victorious force over all capitalist reaction – over capitalism as a social and economic system.

Regarding Others on the Left

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22. Trotsky and Trotskyism³⁴

Bertram D. Wolfe

In addition to the 'official' Communist tendency and that of the International Communist Opposition, there has traditionally been a third current in the Communist movement, associated with the name of Leon Trotsky and known as the 'International Left Opposition (Bolshevik Leninists)' or simply after a name derived from its central personality, 'Trotskyism'.

Recently, as we shall see below, this tendency has taken steps which separate it from Communism fundamentally.

Trotskyism a Sectarian Tendency

The Trotsky tendency has no consistent tactical line. It criticises the official Party tactics sometimes as 'opportunist', sometimes as 'leftist' and sometimes as 'centrist'. But in the main, Trotsky has criticised the official line not as ultra-leftist and sectarian, but as not 'left' enough! In point of fact, the Trotsky group has been even more sectarian than the official Party.

The very method of formation of the Trotskyist faction reveals its incurable sectarianism. Its groups in the various countries have nothing to say on the problems of the masses in the country in question. They have a fixed credo, a memorised and invariable litany which they recite on all occasions, to all questioners, as the solution of all problems. And the magic words of their ritual are: 'condemnation of the Kuo Min Tang policy of 1924–8; condemnation of the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee; condemnation of Stalin's theory of two-class (worker and peasant) parties... permanent revolution... rejection of the theory of socialism in one country...' (quoted from '*The Eleven Points – The Fundamental Principles of the International Left Opposition*'. – but it might have been quoted from any one of a hundred other documents in which the Trotsky sacred litany has been offered as the patent medicine cure-all).

34 Wolfe 1933. pp. 39–49.

In other words, the formation of the Trotskyist groups in each country and on a world scale takes place not on the burning questions on which the movement should be built and to which answers must be found, but on the basis of the points of difference (mostly outlived) on which Trotsky differed from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. These questions form a closed system of ritualistic dogmas without any regard to their actuality or to their present direct relation to the vital questions of the revolutionary movement. This doctrinal sectarianism could not produce anything but a doctrinaire sect.

Trotskyism as Inverted Stalinism

Trotskyism in international outlook and method shares all the defects of the Stalinist system. Like Stalin, Trotsky measures all groups and tendencies in other countries exclusively on the basis of their stand on the factional issues in the Russian Party. As Stalin has distorted internationalism in his factional interests, so Trotsky in his. Neither encourages a system of collective international leadership for the Communist International. Both seek to convert the International into a tail to a Russian faction.

The official apparatus in each country is judged not by its ability to develop and lead the class struggle in its sector of the world, but by its loyalty to Stalin; the Trotskyist opposition in each country gathered and judged in identical fashion, on the basis of loyalty to Trotsky.

Both Trotsky and Stalin are 'the best disciples of Lenin'. The organs of both tendencies are filled with personal glorification of their respective leaders, in a fashion which Lenin never permitted to prevail towards him during his lifetime, a fashion alien to the spirit of Communist leadership. And each side hurls incredible factional abuse at the other. Trotsky, in the Stalinist papers, is a conscious counterrevolutionary, a White Guardist. Stalin, in the Trotskyist papers, is an agent of the Kulak and the Nepman, a strangler of the Russian Revolution, an agent of the 'masked counter-revolution which still contains the outward forms and ritual of the revolution'. (Thermidor.)

Mechanical methods of leadership and control are identical in the two camps. The system of 'new turns' without explanations and without recognition of error, the system of expulsions for the least disagreement, the system of open letters as the line of demarcation between 'loyalites' and 'renegades', the system of plenipotentiary and personal representatives, and decisions arrived at, not on the basis of discussion by the membership, but on the basis of decision by letter or cable from Moscow or Prinkipo – are all common to Trotskyism and Stalinism.

Trotskyism attempts to preserve the appearance of internationalism by an attack on the so-called doctrine of 'national socialism'. Trotsky pretends that Stalin is in favor of 'socialism in one country' while he, Trotsky, is in favor of 'socialism in all countries'.

Thus Trotskyism tries to preserve the appearance of genuine internationalism for his international apparatus developed on the basis of and for the sake of factional struggle in the Russian Party. Neither faction has any use for the principle of adaptation and modification of the general line to the specific and concrete conditions of the various countries. This view is branded as 'exceptionalism' by Stalin, as 'national socialism' by Trotsky. The joint rejection of the theory of 'exceptionalism' (see Chapter Three) constitutes the common point of departure for the false line and methods of both the Trotskyites and the present official leadership of the International.

Question of Socialism in One Country

The dogmatic rejection of the possibility of 'building up Socialism in one country' is an old Trotskyist error. Prior to the November revolution it took the form of a disbelief in the possibility that 'a revolutionary Russia would be able to *hold out* in face of conservative Europe, or that Socialist Germany would be able to remain isolated in a capitalist world'. Against this Lenin polemicised most sharply. In its latest form it represents a profound disbelief in the possibility of the Soviet Union's building up socialism on the basis of its own economic resources and class forces.

In the first years of the Russian Revolution, the situation was so desperate in Russia (breakdown as the result of war, famine, revolution and counterrevolution and foreign invasion) and the revolution seemed so imminent in Germany and other Western lands, that there was and could be no thought of building socialism in a temporarily isolated Russia. The only thought was to hold on a little longer until the revolution should break out in the West. But in the early 1920s, when it became apparent that capitalism was being stabilised and that there would be a shorter or longer period when the two systems would exist side by side without either for the moment being able to overthrow the other, then it became necessary to canvass the possibility of doing something else beside just holding out – namely using the vast and varied resources and revolutionary initiative of the Russian masses and Russian land for the building of socialism as long as peace should last. In this respect the Central Committee, and after its disruption Stalin and his group, in spite of various crudities of formulation and blunders in detail, have been correct, and Trotsky's fiercely eloquent but empty phrases about not 'socialism in one country' but 'world

revolution', served only to cloak a purely negative and defeatist pessimism as to the possibility of building socialism.

So convinced is Trotsky that no one could think otherwise (except of course, Stalin), that when Lenin wrote and began to direct attention toward this problem and wrote in his last article before his death that the Soviet Union 'possesses all that is necessary and sufficient for the complete construction of Socialism', Trotsky explains that if Lenin meant 'all the necessary and sufficient material prerequisites' then 'we would have to surmise that either Lenin slipped in his dictation or the stenographer made a mistake in deciphering her notes'.(!!!)

The Permanent Revolution

The Trotskyist conceptions as to the course and consequent strategy of the revolution are given in his doctrine of 'permanent revolution'. This theory gives the real key to his disbelief in the possibility of building socialism in the Soviet Union, for it reveals a profound disbelief in the revolutionary role of the peasantry in alliance with the proletariat.

'But after it has seized power', he writes, 'the proletariat cannot confine itself to the bourgeois framework of the revolution. . . . This means for the proletariat hostile encounters with every group of the bourgeoisie which has supported the proletariat at the beginning of the revolutionary struggle, not only with these but *with the broad masses of the peasantry as well . . .*' (emphasis ours – B.D.W.).

Here, as elsewhere. Trotskyism camouflages its pessimism as to the forces of the revolution under a left-sounding cloak – in this case employing the famous Marxian term of 'the revolution in permanence' to cover a thoroughly un-Marxian picture of the course of the revolution.

The Question of 'Thermidor'

The central point of the entire political system of Trotskyism is its estimation of the class character of the Soviet power. Trotsky has the habit of substituting analogy for analysis. His *Thermidor* analogy is not only false but dangerous. *Thermidor* was the month in the French revolutionary calendar when Robespierre was beheaded, the speculator-reactionary government came into power, and the French counterrevolution began. According to Trotsky, the Russian Revolution is now going through its *Thermidor*. He put it as follows:

Right now, under the centrist regime, [his name for Stalinism – B.D.W.] the country is compelled to pass through a ‘Kerensky period upside-down’. The function of the historical Kerensky period consisted in this: that on its back the power of the bourgeoisie passed over to the proletariat. The historic role of the Stalin period consists in this: that upon its back the power is gliding over from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie. In general the post-Lenin leadership is unwinding the October film in a reverse direction.³⁵

In the same article, Trotsky declares that the leaders of the Soviet power are bearers of the influence of the class enemy who are striving to overthrow the proletarian dictatorship. He proposes the reintroduction of the secret ballot because of the fear on the part of the workers ‘of the pressure of the bourgeoisie reflected through the apparatus’.

From struggle by secret ballot against ‘the pressure of the bourgeoisie’, Trotskyism developed into the conduct of strikes. Thus the *Militant*, in its article from Russia boasts that: ‘During this period the Moscow comrades . . . have assumed charge of a whole series of strikes which were provoked by the policy of the bureaucracy. . . . This has further irritated the bureaucracy’.³⁶

In subsequent writings Trotsky comes to the conclusion that ‘the Bolshevik Party no longer exists’, that ‘Soviets no longer exist’, that trade unions do not either; that the state is proletarian ‘only in its property relations’ but not in the sense of workers’ rule through Party, unions and Soviets. It is no longer a proletarian dictatorship, merely a ‘bureaucratic dictatorship’, and, at that the dictatorship of a bureaucracy which ‘in the struggle against the Left Opposition . . . was an instrument of the counterrevolutionary forces’.

Error has its logic as well as truth. One wrong step leads to another, so that today the Trotskyites are proposing to imperil the unity of the Russian proletarian rule by trying to form a rival, and of course, conspirative, Party in the Soviet Union, and a whole new international to back up this new phase of the Russian factional struggle with international support.

A Departure on Fundamentals

Such a viewpoint represents a serious departure not merely from the strategy and tactics, but from the *fundamentals of Communism*. However shamefully

35 (Written in October 1928.)

36 *Militant*, 15 August 1930.

the Stalin leadership has misused the apparatus of the Soviet State for factional purposes, nevertheless the Communist Party of the Soviet Union remains a Communist Party, the Soviet state a proletarian government both in property relations and class rule, and while we are seeking to correct its errors and restore inner Party democracy, this does not for a moment justify a false analysis of the class character of that state; nor an attempt to build a rival party in Russia, which can only be built in actual struggle and which threatens the unity of the proletariat and the existence of the dictatorship itself; nor the conduct of strikes against the workers' government.

All other differences between Trotskyism and official Communism on tactical questions are entirely permissible within the limits of the Communist movement, and it is the fault of official Communism, not of the Trotskyites, that they have to be fought 'from outside' and not discussed and settled inside the Party. But the difference on the class character of the Soviet state and the attitude towards it is one involving the very fundamentals of Communism and consequently membership in the Communist International.

Flirting with Civil War

The latest stage in the development of this aspect of Trotskyism is the beginning of what we can only hope will be a short-lived literary flirtation with the idea of a new civil war in the Soviet Union. In the *Militant*, Trotsky writes under his pen name of 'G.G.' an imaginary dialogue between 'A' and 'B'. The answers of A are the views of Trotsky. Here is a selection:

A. . . . 'To speak now of the reform of the CPSU would mean to look backward and not forward. . . . In the USSR it is necessary to build a Bolshevik party again.'

B – 'But isn't that the road of civil war?'

A. answers that the civil war has already in essence begun, that the counter-revolutionary forces used the Stalinist bureaucracy as an instrument to crush the only truly revolutionary force, the left opposition, and now the counter-revolution will split the Stalinist bureaucracy and proceed to the next stage of the civil war.

'B – 'So the civil war is inevitable'.

A. 'Right at the present moment it is taking place'. . . .³⁷

37 *Militant*, 21 October 1933.

We should not exaggerate the significance of this literary flirtation with the idea of civil war. Obviously, however, the Trotskyites consider the Party dead, and part at least of its apparatus an instrument of enemy classes. It cannot be reformed. A new party must be built to split and replace the old, and if this involves civil war as it does, why it is not the fault of the Trotskyites, and besides it is already on! Verily, error has its logic as well as truth!

The Fourth International

As usual, Trotsky has generalised on an international scale his tactics in the Russian struggle. Having decided to build a 'new', i.e. rival, party in the Soviet Union, he couples it with the building of 'new' parties in all countries and a 'new', or Fourth International.

'The Bolshevik-Leninists', writes Trotsky, 'cannot by their own forces regenerate the Bolshevik Party and save the dictatorship of the proletariat'.

As a groundwork for this complete break with the Communist International, Trotsky advances the theory that instead of being criminally stupid and wrong in their tactics in Germany, the German Communist Party and the CPSU have both 'betrayed the revolution'.

'Wels on the one hand, Stalin on the other have placed Hitler in the saddle... the Comintern in agony can give nothing to the world proletariat, absolutely nothing, save evil'. Hence to the Second and Third internationals, Trotsky proposes to add another which numerically will be named the Fourth, but politically will stand between the Second and the Third as a centrist International.

Danger of a Centrist International

There is a new development of centrism manifest in the international labor movement today. In the Socialist International, a drift to the left, in the Communist movement a drift to the right of certain sections (leadership of the Swedish section of the ICO, the Walcher-Fröhlich elements formerly in the German Communist Opposition and the Trotskyites on a world scale). The leftward movement from the Second International is in danger of being stopped halfway and prevented from arriving at a full Communist position as a result of three factors:

1. The impotence and stupidities of official Communism which repulses them.

2. Old centrist leaders who may again, as they have done before, head a secession from the Second International in order to behead it and lead it back when it has spent its force.

3. The rightward drift in the Communist forces which is trying to crystallise the in-between elements and freeze them in an 'in-between' position, an 'in-between' international.

Trotskyism and Centrism

Of course Trotsky is vociferous against 'centrism'. But an examination reveals that what he means by 'a struggle against Centrism' is a struggle against Stalin, the official parties and the Comintern! This official or Stalinist current he calls 'bureaucratic centrism'! Thus, when Trotsky attacks 'centrism' it is his politically false name for what should be attacked as bureaucracy and sectarianism. And against real centrism he has nothing to say. His guns are trained in the other direction!

The older centrism used to be characterised by two political features:

1. Platonic friendship for the Soviet Union, and
2. Rejection of Communism for the Western lands in favor of 'democracy' and parliamentarism.

But with the discrediting and decay of bourgeois democracy in the face of Fascism, the old Centrism is played out. Trotskyism furnishes a basis for a new variety, which is forced to reject democracy in the West but can borrow from Trotsky a whole ideological arsenal against the Soviet government in Russia. What kind of an international will it be that is to be built out of centrist elements upon the basis of an extreme anti-Soviet and anti-Comintern orientation as embodied in such declaration as this: 'The Stalinist bureaucracy has liquidated the Party, Soviet and trade-union democracy not only in essence but also in form'!

'The acts and declarations of Soviet diplomacy have provoked the burning and entirely righteous indignation of the advanced workers. The apparatus of the Comintern has completely gone over from Marxism to centrism (Trotsky's name for ultra-leftism!), from internationalism to national limitedness'. (From the joint declaration of the International Left Opposition – Trotskyites – for the formation of a new International.)

To cap the climax, at a time when bourgeois democracy is discredited even in the Socialist camp in Germany, Trotsky comes out for the restoration of bourgeois democracy as a system, the restoration of the Weimar constitution which paved the way for fascism, and the reconvening of the old Reichstag,

as transitional demands in Germany!³⁸ (See *Militant* August 26, 1933.) Thus Trotsky becomes the main rallying point for the new centrism and his views and efforts to organize a new international become a serious obstacle in the way of the rehabilitation of the world-Communist movement and in the way of emergence of a genuine left movement from the Second International to Communism.

An Old Role

This is nothing new for Trotsky. Twice before, once prior to 1905, and again in the period between 1907 and 1914, Trotsky stood between the Bolshevik or revolutionary current and the Menshevik current and tried to serve as a rallying center which objectively was directed against Bolshevism. This long fight culminated in the August Block in 1912. If the Russian proletariat had followed Trotsky instead of Lenin in that period, there would have been no crystallised Bolshevik Party at the outbreak of the World War to lead the struggle against war and for revolution. In general, Leon Trotsky, who has shown undoubted heroism and ability to 'land right side up' both in 1905 and 1917 when the wave of revolution is high and the movement advancing, has been consistently and dangerously wrong when the tide of revolution is low or in ebb. In 1903 he was with Martov and against Lenin on the main question that then separated Menshevism and Bolshevism, the organization question.

When the revolutionary wave receded after 1907, he was wrong again on the main question separating Right and Left and opposed the formation of the Bolshevik Party and the separation between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. In the early war period he again fought the main revolutionary slogan: 'Defeat your own bourgeoisie' (although not on a pro-war basis). But as the tide of struggle against war rose higher, he gravitated toward Lenin and in 1917 to 1920 he wrote an imperishable page in the history of the Russian Revolution, the organization of the Red Army and the Civil War. But when the world revolution did not spread and capitalism succeeded in affecting temporary stabilization, he again went off the track (ultra-leftist sectarianism in the Comintern and struggle on principle against the building of socialism in the Soviet Union) and has now drifted far from a Communist position with his 'Thermidor', his struggle for a new party in Russia, which if persisted in and successfully pushed, must lead to civil war, and his drive for a new centrist international.

38 See *Militant*, 26 August 1933.

Trotskyism and the Communist Opposition

Between the Communist Opposition and Trotskyism there are thus two kinds of differences. On the one hand, our struggle against Stalin's bureaucratic organizational methods and against the sectarian tactical line of the Comintern necessarily involves a simultaneous struggle against the similar conceptions of Trotskyism. On the other, there are certain views of Trotskyism (Thermidor, estimation of and attitude towards the Soviet government, new party in the Soviet Union and rival centrist international) which separate them in our judgment from Communism not on tactical questions but on fundamentals. One thing is certain, that the international Trotskyist faction, even if it abandons the views that separate it from Communism on fundamentals, can never become a rallying center for reuniting the Comintern, not only because of its own methods and inner regime, but above all because, as the most stubborn expression of sectarianism, it is suffering in an even more acute form from precisely those fundamental defects in the system of leadership and strategy which have thrown the whole Comintern into crisis!

23. Joining the CPO³⁹

Dorothy Dare (Baltimore, Md., 1934)

I joined the Communist Party in July 1929. What I knew about the CPO came from a song which ended with the determination ‘to hang Jay Lovestone on a sour-apple tree’.

During my membership in the Party I criticised it for being sectarian, without myself realizing that the sectarianism of the Party was due to the ultra-left tactical line and not, as I then thought, to the fact that we did not lead enough struggles.

Mainly I had disagreements on the way the tactical line was applied (or not applied) or else I criticised isolated instances of ultra-left actions; united front from below; exposing the social fascists; splitting reformist-led unemployed movements; building unemployed organizations which endorsed the CP; creating ‘red’ and ‘revolutionary’ unions which endorsed the CP; or having too many unprepared demonstrations.

Despite these disagreements I carried out all Party decisions as a loyal member. I was arrested several times for distributing TUUL leaflets at mill gates and served six weeks in the Washington workhouse after being arrested in a demonstration before the Japanese Embassy, even though I did not think the slogan of driving out the Japanese diplomatic representatives, a sensible one.

Why did I do so? Because when one has confidence in the Party, in one’s right to criticise and correct, one is willing to carry out all decisions. After Hitler took power without a struggle I began to raise questions. Was dual unionism a good tactic in Germany when the CPG⁴⁰ issued calls for general strikes and not a single factory responded? Was the united front from below such a good tactic since it was proven that the CPG did not succeed in winning over Social-Democratic workers, despite the treachery of their leaders?

39 *Workers Age*, 15 November 1934, p. 6.

40 *Editors’ note*: this is a reference to the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, whose initials are more generally given in English-language scholarly literature as KPD.

As I began to criticise the tactical line I became aware that democratic centralism existed in words but not in practice; that most comrades in the CP had been taught that the basis for membership was not only unity of principle and unity of action, but also unity of tactical views and opinions. To question the tactical line seemed like questioning the basic principles, to these comrades. I began to see before me the evils resulting from a lack of democratic centralism: a low political level; irresponsibility; decisions remaining on paper; membership fluctuation; bureaucratic leadership and a wrong tactical line. This, since changing conditions did not bring a corresponding change in tactics which can come only through discussion and criticism.

My knowledge of the CPO being confined to the lies and slanders circulated in the Party, I could see no way out and was a fair way of becoming thoroughly demoralised.

I must confess that it was the Party which set me on the road towards the CPO. I had expressed the view, in the course of a discussion, that Muste was a centrist and not a social fascist. The section promptly elected an enlightenment committee and after some conversations on the united front, social fascism, dual unionism, etc. I was told that I was conciliating with 'Lovestoneism'! This was news to me. It was then that I began to read carefully the *Workers Age* and found the Party to be perfectly correct. My views were the views of the CPO.

I was expelled by the district secretariat without even the formality of a hearing before the section committee or the members.

This much the CPO has done for me – it has restored my confidence in Communism, in the cause of the working class. In joining the CPO I cannot promise to set the Chesapeake Bay on fire. But I hope to do some effective work for the Communist movement in this city – by working for the unity of the Communist Party on the basis of democratic centralism, against sectarianism, reformism and centrism, for a Leninist Communist Party that can do the job of ridding us of this bankrupt capitalist system.

24. May Day Speech 1937⁴¹

Edward Welsh

(The following is the full text of the speech which aroused the ire of Communist Party spokesmen. It was delivered in Union Square on 1 May 1937 to the assembled tens of thousands of workers by Edward Welsh, representing the Communist Party (Opposition) – editor, *Workers Age*.)

Comrades and fellow-workers!

The contingent now passing the reviewing stand is the Communist Party (Opposition) on whose behalf I have the honor of speaking. In the name of the Communist Party (Opposition) I greet the tens of thousands of working men and women participating in this great May Day demonstration as well as in other demonstrations throughout the country and throughout the world.

May Day for us is a day of reckoning, a day when the working class must take an inventory and review the events of the past year of class struggles and to gird itself for the struggles that are to come.

May Day for us is also important because it presents us with a living example of what we mean when we strive to bring about a class front – a united front of labor on a common program upon which we can all agree, against a common enemy with whom we all disagree – the employing class, the exploiters of those who toil! The spirit of May Day, if kept alive and encouraged beyond 1 May, could unleash the only force with a program for social progress existing in present-day society – the organized working class. It could fashion that powerful weapon against reaction, Fascism and war that we are all so eager to develop.

⁴¹ *Workers Age*, 15 May 1937, p. 2.

Greetings to Soviets

We extend our greetings to the workers of the Soviet Union who, in spite of great obstacles and shortcomings, are marching forward building a workers' fatherland, a socialist state over one sixth of the world's surface. The Soviet Union stands as a bulwark for peace, a mighty fortress for the world proletariat. Hail the Soviet Union! Defend the Soviet Union!

Long Live the Struggle for World Socialism!

In Nazi Germany, Hitler is attempting to make a sham and a mockery of the significance of this great international day of labor.

But if we could put our ears close to the hearts of the German workers we would hear the vibrant strains of the 'International' rising above and drowning out the songs that are being forced from their lips. And as we demonstrate here today, let us think of those brave sons of the working class who are at this very moment imprisoned in the Fascist dungeons and concentration camps. Let us raise our voices in solidarity with these workers and with the workers in the German underground movement who are holding aloft the banner of working-class struggle, valiantly continuing the struggle that will finally lead to the destruction of the barbarous Hitler regime and will create in its stead a Soviet Germany.

For Soviet Spain

We greet the heroic struggles of the Spain masses. In Spain the class war has reached its highest pitch. Against the Spanish toilers are arrayed the combined forces of capitalist reaction, the hordes of Spanish, Italian and German fascists plus the indirect support given by the so-called great democracies – England, France and these United States.

Comrades! Workers and peasants of Spain! The earth is yours – you have arms in your hands – take it! Out of a bourgeois-democratic republic the monster Fascism raised its ugly head.

Destroy the Fascist monstrosity and along with it its diseased parent – bourgeois democracy. Forward to a workers' and peasants' government! Forward to a Soviet Spain!

We extend our greetings of solidarity to our own class war prisoners, to the workers who are languishing in the prison cells and dungeons in this our

'great American democracy'. We greet Tom Mooney and Warren K. Billings, the Scottsboro boys and other victims of capitalist reaction, as living symbols of the class war at home, indicating in the most glaring manner the tasks which lie ahead for the American working class.

Through CIO to Victory

In the course of the past year, there has emerged a new champion, a new spokesman of labor in this country. A movement deserving the unflinching and unstinting support of every working man and woman. A movement whose flaming bright banners bearing the letters CIO gleam across the industrial skies of America and whose message brings a new hope for a better life for hundreds of thousands of toilers in the mines, mills and factories of this great land. The CIO and industrial unionism will organize the workers in the mass-production industries.

The working class must learn not to rely upon capitalist politicians whether they appear as spokesmen for the Republican-Liberty League clique or hide behind a pious grin in an effort to conceal their class treachery, to conceal the brutal rule of Wall Street and the rule of the Democratic lynch-ridden South. Labor must take the road of independent political action. Build a Labor Party!

We must carry on the fight until the working class of America takes America for the working class, putting an end to exploitation, misery and poverty, and upon the ruins of the old build a new world, a workers' world, a socialist society.

Long live working-class unity! Defeat Fascism! For a Soviet America!

25. Ben Gitlow's *I Confess*⁴²

Bernard Herman

1 What Does Gitlow 'Confess'?

Benjamin Gitlow has written his confession of why he has broken with the Communist movement, the Socialist movement and the working-class movement. There can be no question, given the degeneration of Stalinist Russia and the Communist International, and the crisis of the entire working-class movement throughout the world today, that a serious re-examination of the Communist and Socialist movements during the past two decades is vitally necessary and of the greatest importance. An honest examination requires an objective, self-critical approach. It demands, for example, the seeking of the causes, for example, the seeking of the causes of the growing degeneration of the Comintern and its parties not in the personal wickedness of its one or many leaders, but in the very nature and structure of the Third International. Such an examination would require a careful analysis of the stages of development of world Communism, its positive contributions, of its decay – of its transformation from a revolutionary to a counterrevolutionary force.

Positive Side Ignored

This necessary job, Gitlow altogether fails to do. He hardly touches the problem, and when he does, he fails to illumine. He does not estimate in objective fashion the most positive, revolutionary-socialist role of the Communist movement in its first period. It is an undeniable fact that the Communist movement in its early years, despite fundamental defects in structure and method, alone held aloft the banner of revolutionary socialism. It is undeniable also that it was the working-class political organization in this country that, to its credit, first raised the question of a labor party and the amalgamation of the trade unions, and that fought unceasingly against imperialism, militarism,

42 *Workers Age*, 11 May 1940, p. 4; 18 May 1940, p. 3; 25 May 1940, pp. 3–4.

class collaboration, 'capitalist efficiency socialism', 'Fordism' and the like. One may criticise the effectiveness of the movement of this period, or the approach and methods employed, but a proper estimate cannot ignore the activities of the Communist Party of the 1920s in furthering progressive policies in the American labor movement and in arousing working-class consciousness. In estimating the effect of the Russian domination, it is also necessary to show the relatively healthy influence of the Comintern in the earlier years compared with the Stalin period following 1929 – for example, in eradicating infantile leftism and revolutionary romanticism, the dual-union and sectarian outlook that was rife in the Communist movement in the first period. All this, Gitlow fails to do or even to grasp. He therefore fails to make any real contribution to a re-examination of the history of the Communist movement.

Gitlow's conclusions – repudiation of the existing working-class movement and uncritical exultation of bourgeois democracy – do not follow from his criticism. His critique, in so far as it is valid, is based on his viewpoint developed after 1929, that is, on the viewpoint of the Independent Labor League of America. He exposes once again the totalitarian regime established in the American Communist Party by Stalin in 1929, the suppression of all democracy and all freedom of thought within the organization, and its conversion into a Russian police agency. He shows the constant interference of the Russian leaders in the internal affairs of the Party during earlier years and exposes the mechanical transplantation from Russia to America not only of political line, but also of internal Party struggles. This very sound criticism, however, does not warrant the repudiation of Marxism or revolutionary socialism. The only logical conclusion from such a criticism would be that a revolutionary working-class political movement in this country should be based on the needs and the problems of the American working class – and bow down to no *Führer*, and under no circumstances subordinate itself to the arbitrary will of any party or power abroad. It should, of course, maintain international relations with other working-class organizations, but only on the basis of equality or freedom of criticism, not on corpse-like discipline and subordination. But Gitlow draws none of these logical conclusions. Rather, he sees in the degeneration of the Stalinist movement the excuse for repudiating every form of revolutionary socialism. This book is therefore as defective in its conclusions as it is in its critical re-examination.

Gitlow is not an isolated phenomenon. Throughout the world, Communist leaders even more prominent than Gitlow, whose record of service to labor and persecution in its causes is equal to his, have been led to break with the working-class movement entirely through disillusionment with the barbarous methods and suicidal policies of the Stalin regime. Jacques Doriot, for example, even went over to Fascism. A number have gone over to bourgeois

democracy. The burden of blame for this demoralization of proletarian forces must fall upon the brutal Stalinist dictatorship. But no amount of degeneration of the Communist International can excuse the abandonment of the working-class movement or of the revolutionary principles which Stalin was the first to attack. There must be some defect in the character and make-up of the individual himself that contributes. Gitlow's book reveals what that defect is, and to that small, negative degree he does render a contribution.

Confessing the Errors of Others

Elementary honesty would require that Gitlow begin his confession by an examination of his own errors. This he has failed to do. The book is a confession of other people's errors, real or alleged, made for them by Gitlow. His own errors, Gitlow does not confess; he justifies them and vindicates himself. He attributes gross sins and errors, as he sees them, either political or personal, to all the Communist and Socialist organizations he has ever been associated with. He ascribes the most ignoble motives to everybody in the Communist movement except himself, even in the days when merely being a member meant arrest and persecution, perhaps deportation. He fails to see any elements of sincere devotion to ideals and principles anywhere but in himself. Even when he confesses, here and there, an error of his own, he is always careful to assure the reader that he was, nevertheless, acting from the best and most sincere motives. With what scorn does he treat the revolutionary romanticism of Ruthenberg in planning to break out of Sing Sing [prison]! But when he describes his own at least equally fantastic plan to affect the escape of Gene Debs from Woodstock prison, he excuses it by the 'exuberance of youth'. He never seems to be able to treat others with the same tolerance and understanding. Yet when, with the help of Lenin, this 'exuberance of youth', this revolutionary romanticism, began to turn into a more mature understanding of American reality, Gitlow himself was among the last to sober up – which, of course, he fails to tell us. He passes lightly over the significance of the fact that he was the leader of the so-called 'Goose' caucus of the underground CP Convention of 1922. It was the 'Goose' caucus which insisted on maintaining the existence of the underground Communist organization which would mechanically control the legal Workers' Party. This Gitlow continued to live in a world of revolutionary romanticism (not to speak of fostering an outlived underground movement and undemocratic form of organization) at a time when other leaders of the movement, such as Ruthenberg, Lovestone and Wolfe had passed beyond that stage. Writing in 1939, he justifies his old position. Was it not in agreement with the 21 Points of the Comintern? This in itself is no condemnation of the Gitlow of 1922. But it does condemn a 'confession' written almost two decades later in which he is unable to make a frank and critical self-evaluation.

Gitlow apparently believes he has the good fortune to possess that remarkable mechanism known as a 'sincere-ometer', which always registers infallibly the degree of people's revolutionary sincerity. But, of course, one must understand that he is simply justifying his own course of abandoning the working-class movement. Most of Gitlow's book could just as well have been written as an attack on a movement thoroughly sound in its socialist principles and politics.

In fact, the book is written in several different styles and from several widely varying points of view. Some portions of the book, a few pages or a few paragraphs each time, are in a style entirely different from the personal, subjective narrow-minded Gitlowesque manner. They are either examples of inlay-work, having been lifted and rewritten from the *Workers Age*, or they are ghost-written. . . . Other pages, such as those describing Stalin's brutal treatment of the American Communist Party, are apparently based on letters and other documents written in 1929. Such brief passages are from Gitlow, the Communist oppositionist of 1929, and not from the irate witness for the prosecution of 1939.



2 Gitlow's 'Confession' is Merely Self-justification

Ben Gitlow's *I Confess* is written from three widely varying points of view: (1) the viewpoint of a Philistine Sunday School teacher or a Mrs. Grundy, who is horrified at every 'irregularity'; (2) a viewpoint uncomfortably close to that of an open-shop employer, who detests militant unionism, has chills of fear about the class struggle; (3) the viewpoint of an independent democratic socialist, who is rightfully indignant at Stalin's contempt for socialist ideals and his disregard for the class interests of the American workers. But in all the varying viewpoints, Gitlow's pervading theme is self-justification.

No reviewer of the book was taken in by the first point of view. The second appears only occasionally, but it was the third, the critical-socialist approach to Stalinism, which impressed most of the reviewers as to the 'honesty' of the book.

Confession Begins at Home

As to the section dealing with the private lives and human frailties of various Communist leaders – confession, like charity, begins at home. The great merit

of great confessions, whether of Rousseau, or of Cassanova, or of Benvenuto Cellini, is that they reveal frankly and with great truth of utterance the most intimate thoughts, feelings and experiences of the writers themselves. Gitlow has the effrontery to dilate on the amatory adventures of Ruthenberg, Weinstone, Pepper, Browder and others, but has nothing whatever to say of himself. This is fundamentally dishonest. It is certainly not 'confession'. At times it becomes nauseating and insufferable.

Even Gitlow would admit that the people who made up the Communist movement during the years of which he writes were in some sense human. Lacking comparative statistics on the subject, but having read of the high rate of illegitimate births among high-school girls in the United States in the 1920s, I dare say that the sexual morality of the Communist youth in that decade, at which Gitlow pretends to stand aghast, was not materially better or worse than that of the average youth in the country. Similarly, Gitlow's horror at the drinking habits of William Z. Foster and his friends can only be based on complete ignorance of the habits of American trade unionists, or of Republican, Democratic or American Legion delegates assembled in Convention.

Reactionary Attitude

The open-shop employer's point of view can be seen in Gitlow's tear-shedding over the violence suffered by scabs in the furriers' strike, while simultaneously ignoring the indescribable brutality directed against strikers. Violence against strike-breakers is not a peculiarly Russian or Communist phenomenon, as Gitlow implies. It is thoroughly 100-percent American.

The same attitude appears in the proud display of false passports on the fly-leaf of the book and in the horrendous details regarding the use of such passports. He has here descended to a level which regards the police regulations of the various countries as the embodiment of sacred morality and the policeman's orders as the acme of human wisdom.

Financial support once given by the revolutionary movement in Russia to the revolutionary movement in other countries sends shivers up and down the Gitlow spine. To see no difference between genuine fraternal assistance and the financing of a puppet organization along Stalin lines is truly shameful. Who, calling himself a socialist, or even a liberal, would hesitate to send financial help to the underground anti-Fascist movements of Germany, France or Spain? But such assistance can never be made an instrument of dependency or the suppression of equality and democracy. Gitlow makes no such distinction. Rather, he calls for the cops.

Chauvinistic Strain

Gitlow reveals a chauvinistic strain in his section dealing with the support of the Communist movement in the 1920s to the struggle for freedom in colonial countries. To him, this activity was merely the expression of Russian foreign policy. As a matter of fact, the support of imperialist oppression by the Communist parties, under the influence of Russian foreign policy, emerged only in 1935. Before that time, the Communist movement fought colonial enslavement even where the Russian government had entered into favorable trade agreements and diplomatic relations with the imperialist powers. Apparently, Gitlow with his keen analytical mind, can find absolutely nothing new and counterrevolutionary in Stalinism. It therefore remains a complete mystery to the reader of the book why Gitlow waited until 1929 to break with so counterrevolutionary a regime. Even from the standpoint of a decent bourgeois democrat, the struggle for colonial independence is worthy of support; how much more then from the class-conscious revolutionary point of view of the Communists of the 1920s! Gitlow's remarks in this connection are also thoroughly dishonest.

Gitlow is not above trying to frighten the old ladies of the DAR by constantly referring to the most ordinary relations of Party members in these terms: 'I sent my agents there'. 'My spies reported to me so and so'. The impression is created of a vast conspiratorial GPU apparatus of spies and agents, permeating the Communist Party in the 1920s. Actually, I knew one of the 'agents' that he mentions. He never was in the GPU. He spent his spare time, after working all day, enrolling students in the classes at the Party school and practicing on his violin. I can assure the DAR that today, if they can manage to stray out of earshot of his violin, they can sleep undisturbed at night.

The process of self-justification takes on a fantastic character in Gitlow's account of his travels through four different political parties within six or seven years. In justifying his break with the Communist Party, Gitlow is compelled to resort to the facts and the arguments of the ILLA, for he was not expelled alone. He was part of a political tendency, and by no means its foremost leader. But when he is explaining his withdrawal from the ILLA (the then Communist Party Opposition) in 1932, and later from the Socialist Party, he has to invent rather fanciful reasons in order to justify himself.

Gitlow claims that he left the Lovestone group because it considered that 'Stalin was correct'. Gitlow refrains from quoting his own theses, printed at that time in *Workers Age*. An examination of the documents shows that Gitlow's resolution agreed with the majority in the condemnation of the Stalin regime, the Leader-cult, and the suppression of Party democracy in the Comintern. It agreed with the majority in criticizing Stalin's forced collectivization of the

peasantry. It even agreed with the majority in endorsing the Five-Year Plan. Gitlow's resolution disagreed with the majority primarily in criticizing Stalin's neglect of light industry. I quote from Gitlow's resolution:

"That we affirm our position in favor of the Five-Year Plan, which includes the speediest possible construction of heavy industry and the collectivization of agriculture as the prerequisites for the building up of socialism in the Soviet Union. . . . That we point out the difficulties faced by the C.P.S.U. in carrying out the Five-Year Plan due to the backwardness of the Russian masses, the effects of the economic crisis, the acuteness of the war danger. That we reiterate, in spite of the errors and mistakes made by the C.P.S.U. leadership, our support of the Soviet Union, its achievements, the example that it sets for the world proletariat and our pledge to defend the Soviet Union in the event of war to the maximum of our ability and with all our resources as the center of the proletarian revolution and the fatherland of the working class and the oppressed masses the world over.⁴³

The rest of the resolution is equally worth reading.

Why Gitlow Left the ILLA

Judged in 1940, the Gitlow of 1932 was what would be called these days a violent pro-Stalinist. Yet in his book, Gitlow attempts to invent for himself a record of never-failing intransigence and extremism in the struggle against Stalin. If we are to go by documents, Gitlow left the Lovestone group, which based its existence on the fundamental questions of American life and which permitted in its ranks every possible variation of opinion on Russian problems, because of a momentary difference on the tempo of development of Russian heavy and light industry! There could be no more absurd, Russian-minded, motivation for splitting an American working-class organization. And in order to justify himself, Gitlow tells a fable about the '100-percent endorsement of Stalin' by the Lovestone group. And to make it worse, Gitlow insists that this is still the position of the ILLA. Such 'reevaluation' is utterly worthless.

For the sake of keeping up this pose of anti-Stalinist intransigence, Gitlow forgets to mention that he was the leading proponent of immediate reunification with the Stalinist party in 1931, and the author of a pamphlet entitled *Communist Unity*. For one who has written so little to neglect to mention this work of his in his 'confession' is little short of amazing.

43 *Workers Age*, Vol. 2, No. 3.

In and Out of the SP

After leaving the Lovestone Group, Gitlow tells how he attempted to organize without success a 'block of all Communist oppositions against Stalin'. That is, he attempted to become the leader of the various sectarian Trotskyist splinter groups, which carried on their existence in a political world thousands of miles from America. Nothing could be more fantastic, not even the most romantic venture proposed by any Communist leader in 1919 or 1920. To imagine that these splinter groups, which regarded Trotsky as almost pro-Stalinist because he had broken with Stalin only in 1927, and which looked upon each other as 'attorneys for Stalin', could unite under even the more belated anti-Stalinist and far from subtle leadership of a Gitlow, is fantastic beyond description. Yet Gitlow justifies himself for his noble effort, and puts blame upon the splinter groups. It reveals to what extent Gitlow had taken leave of any sense of political reality as early as that.

Gitlow then tells us how he joined the Socialist Party in 1934. The death of [the anti-Communist leader Morris] Hillquit and the defeat of the Social-Democratic wing at the Detroit Convention opened the doors to the former Communist leader. Gitlow did not rush in. He assures the reader that he did not enter until the SP was properly 'purified' of its opportunist elements – which, of course, sounds very comical today, considering Gitlow's own position. Even Gitlow, then, developed through stages; so why not Stalin?

With various fabrications, Gitlow justifies his leaving the Socialist Party, throwing the blame on that organization. He conceals the real facts. He accuses the Socialist Party, as he did the ILLA previously, of pro-Stalinist tendencies. Even Lazar Becker is accused of pro-Stalinism – Becker who left the Lovestone Group and joined the Socialist Party together with him and whose opposition to Stalinism is unimpeachable. But the real facts are well known.

Book reviewers who accepted the 'honesty' of Gitlow's book on its own say-so will have the opportunity to write their own memoirs in the future and reveal how easily they were taken in.



3 **Gitlow Descends to Sheer Falsification**

Benjamin Gitlow's book, *I Confess*, reveals that deep within him there has smouldered for two decades a consuming ambition for leadership together with a burning resentment against all other leaders of the movement who

have displayed greater ability, intellectual capacity and energy. This was never as evident as in his 'confession'. His book reveals that he was always obsessed with fantastic notions of conspiracies afoot to keep him from his rightful place of leadership. For example, when he came out of prison in 1922, he saw a conspiracy to keep him out of the post of Party Secretary. Leaders of the Communist movement at that time tell me they were totally unaware of any such conspiracy for the simple reason that no one then had the slightest idea that Gitlow was a fit, capable or appropriate candidate for the post as against Charles E. Ruthenberg.

Examples of Falsification

Gitlow's estimates of other people are generally lacking in the most fundamental honesty. I do not have the space here in which to follow him through every one of his falsifications, but I will deal briefly with three examples.

Jay Lovestone, leader of the 'Majority' Group of the Communist Party, Secretary of the Party, and now Secretary of the ILLA, naturally appears as Gitlow's chief target. In the entire book, he devotes only one favorable line to Lovestone – that in 1929, Lovestone alone among the American Party leaders (Bertram D. Wolfe was then out of the country) opposed the pushing through of a shameful resolution condemning Bukharin, at a time when the real issues dividing Stalin and Bukharin were quite unknown in this country. Otherwise, Gitlow misses no opportunity to libel Lovestone. Having no basis of fact for his attack, he simply invents. Lacking any great capacity for invention, he is compelled to turn to Stalin's *Daily Worker* for the inspiration of his major 'revelations'.

In 1924, Lovestone sent Gitlow a letter in which he referred to 'John' and 'Zinn'. Gitlow explains: "John" is John Pepper and "Zinn" is affectionate New York City College style for Zinoviev'. The level of this comment is an accurate indication of the Gitlow caliber. Does one have to be a college graduate to abbreviate names? How infinitely petty! Apparently, Gitlow has never forgiven Lovestone for having had a college education!

What Gitlow has 'Forgotten'

But even Gitlow realizes that a case cannot be built up on abbreviations of Russian names, or on a rather imaginative description of Lovestone's facial characteristics. So he 'confesses' the 1920 'defection' of Lovestone, 'who came to an understanding regarding his freedom from prosecution by appearing as a witness for the state against Harry Winitsky'. What he fails to mention is that this revelation is simply a carbon-copy of the slanderous attack made on Lovestone by Earl Browder in Stalin's *Daily Worker*, December 23, 1929. Ben

Gitlow, as editor of the *Revolutionary Age*, answered the Browder slander in two issues of the paper, Vol. 1, Nos. 6 and 8, 15 January and 15 February 1930. Gitlow published the decision of the International Control Commission of the Communist International exonerating Lovestone after Foster and Cannon had pressed charges in 1925. He published a letter of Charles E. Ruthenberg written 14 March 1922, stating that he (Ruthenberg) had instructed Lovestone to appear at the trial on the basis of a previous ruling of the Executive Committee of the Party; that the Executive Committee had later freed Lovestone from all responsibility in appearing. He also wrote that Ferguson, then an outstanding Party leader and a prominent attorney, had stated 'that he was present during the proceedings and Lovestone followed the instructions given to him by the attorney representing Winitsky, and further, that he has read and studied the proceedings and that there is nothing that comrade Lovestone said that was not already a part of the proceedings and that nothing he said could have been of any material effect in influencing the outcome'.

Gitlow also published a full-page article by Harry Winitsky himself, entitled 'The Facts Speak for Themselves'. I cannot reproduce here Winitsky's long article. Suffice it to point out that 'Browder lies when he states that Lovestone agreed to testify against me when he was offered immunity from prosecution'. He stressed that Lovestone had simply carried out Party instructions, and that his appearance in court was legally mandatory. Winitsky told how, from 1921 to 1925, he was under continuous pressure from the Foster-Lore-Cannon caucus, of which he was a member, to press charges against Lovestone. He described how, at a caucus meeting he attended, at which Lore, Poyntz, Krumbein, Grecht, London and Cannon were present, plans were discussed to frame up Lovestone. After Lovestone's complete exoneration by the Communist International Commission in 1925, Winitsky, while yet a member of the Foster-Cannon Group, sent Lovestone a letter of apology for the methods used against him, a letter that puts the finishing touches on exposing the Browder-Gitlow slander.

Gitlow Dishes Up Old Slanders

'The facts speak for themselves'. Gitlow is well acquainted with these facts. For 12 years after the Winitsky trial, he continued to associate very closely with Lovestone, and during most of that period he fought bitterly in the Party to establish Lovestone's leadership. Through all these years, Gitlow was aware that for almost a decade, those elements in the Communist movement whom he now denounces as most corrupt and unprincipled were attempting to use the Winitsky trial to frame up Lovestone. Yet, without so much as mentioning

one word of this in his book, after even the Stalinists had let the matter rest after Winitsky's devastating reply to Browder, Gitlow dishes out the old libel. It is thus that Gitlow and Browder meet after a separation of 10 years.

Gitlow's 'confession' for Bert Wolfe is on no higher level. He writes that after the 'Red Raids' of 1919:

Wolfe shirked all Party activities, disappeared from his post... After many months, news began to trickle in that Wolfe had left the country and made his way to Mexico. The rank-and-file comrades did not relish what seemed to them cowardice in a leader.

Gitlow has, as usual, completely garbled his facts in order to get in his typical innuendo. The facts are that Wolfe, for many months, edited a paper for the Central Committee of the Party subsequent to the Red Raids. He then became leader of the Party in California, and represented the California organization at the Bridgman underground Convention in 1922, at which Gitlow was present. He never dropped his Party activities, and did not leave for Mexico until after the Bridgman Convention. There, he helped organize and lead the Communist Party of Mexico until 1925. It was none other than Ben Gitlow who was insistent that Wolfe come to work with him in the New York Party district in 1925. If Gitlow's memory is so poor, it would not have required much trouble to verify these facts. If Gitlow does not even know that Wolfe was not in Mexico from 1919 to 1922, it is obvious that his remarks about 'shirking Party duties' and 'cowardice' are as worthless as his other 'facts'.

Another Frame-Up

Gitlow's treatment of the spy charges against Louis C. Fraina in the early days of the movement is another example of his type of 'confession'. He states that Fraina was cleared by the investigating committee, but adds that several members of the committee voted 'no', giving the implication that at least some of the impartial judges considered Fraina guilty. He forgets to mention that those who voted against Fraina were those who had cooked up the charges, that subsequently the Central Committee of the Party unanimously cleared Fraina, that later an investigation was made in Moscow, with the well-known French Communist Rosmer as Chairman of the Committee including two members of Gitlow's own Communist Labor Party, and that this Committee unanimously exonerated Fraina. Nor does he see fit to mention that John Reed, one of the few Communist leaders whose errors Gitlow does not 'confess', appeared before the Committee and testified in Fraina's behalf or that Lenin

subsequently endorsed the decision of the committee exonerating Fraina. All this Gitlow fails to mention in order to stir up suspicion about a matter long since completely cleared up. . . .

Gitlow's treatment of Ruthenberg, Pepper and other people is equally malicious.

Gitlow's book indicates that his own degeneration has kept pace with Stalin's. He, the intransigent opponent of Stalin, has adopted the Stalinist methods of frame-up, vilification and downright slander. The mud-throwing and character-assassination of neither a Stalin nor a Gitlow can destroy leaders who have maintained firmly their devotion to the cause of labor. Basically, the working-class movement judges leaders by the principles they uphold and by what they do, not by factional slanders levelled against them by unscrupulous enemies. By such a standard, Stalin and Gitlow will be judged in their turn by their principles and their deeds. And Gitlow's book of 'confessions' will hardly stand as evidence in his favor!

Marxist Theory

Editors' note: Bertram Wolfe explained in 1940: 'Roughly, Marxism consists of five things: a world view or *Weltanschauung*; a theory of history; an analysis of capitalist society; a guide to politics or social action; and a forecast, vague and tentative, of a coming social order'. One might add that the purpose of Marxist theory was to help the working class comprehend and change the world along socialist lines – analysing the capitalist present, also analysing, summarising and theorising the positive and negative lessons of an accumulation of working-class struggles in order to contribute to the workers' political clarity and hoped-for victory. This certainly was the way that members of the Lovestone group understood Marxism, and some of them made distinctive contributions to the body of Marxist thought in the United States. Some of this permeates items in other sections of this book, but some of the particularly pertinent contributions have been gathered here.

The Lovestone group entered the Great Depression of 1929 believing that the general collapse of capitalism and the forward movement of the world toward a new socialist order – led by the Soviet Union – were unfolding before their eyes. There were, of course, the rising threat of fascism and of a second imperialist global conflict, but these were aspects of capitalist decline and could be overcome by the rising movement of revolutionary labour. Unfortunately, Stalin was riding roughshod over affiliates of the Communist International, on which he was imposing destructively sectarian and ultra-left policies, but his regime and his policies within the Soviet Union were worthy of support. The loyal (or opportunistic) Stalinist 'yes men' at that time leading the US Communist Party were vastly inferior to the Lovestoneites and were destined to become an increasingly marginal force in the labour movement. The Stalin leadership would be forced to recognise this and eventually to make adjustments and corrections, bringing the Lovestoneites back into the Communist mainstream. These perspectives were inseparable from the way members of the Lovestone group understood and utilised Marxism.

As the 1930s came to an end, reality was obviously unfolding quite differently than leaders and members of the Lovestone group had anticipated. The contradictions of the class struggle, as well as of US and global politics, yielded developments they had not anticipated – and certainly not the hoped-for revolutionary triumphs. The unanticipated dynamism and horrors of Nazism and of Stalinism went beyond their conceptual framework (and some of the

Stalinist horrors – the murderous ‘revolution from above’ and forced collectivisation of land in the early 1930s, the initial purge trials in 1936 – they had actually defended, or in some cases at least, quietly gone along with). The inexorably approaching second imperialist war generated powerful and complex pressures for which they were not fully prepared. The beliefs that had animated them at the beginning of the decade could not be sustained, and the result was a re-examination of the belief system, Marxism, to which they had been committed. Some of the key documents of that re-examination are also gathered here.

Applying Marxism (Items One–Five)

There have been a number of studies seeking to explain unique features of US history that – in contrast to Europe as such, and most industrial-capitalist countries – have blocked the development of a substantial working-class socialist movement in the United States.¹ We have already noted the practical tasks for trade-union activists discussed in Jay Lovestone’s pamphlet, *The American Labor Movement: Its Past, Present and Future*, but in this section an historical exposition from the same pamphlet examines ‘Some Specific Features of the American Labor Movement’, an issue also dealt with in Bertram D. Wolfe’s pamphlet *Marx and America*, excerpted here. Presented here in its entirety is Will Herberg’s pamphlet, *The Heritage of the Civil War*, a cutting-edge discussion of the anti-slavery movement, the Civil War of 1861–5, and the Reconstruction era. Challenging both explicit and inadvertent racism in the dominant ‘bourgeois’ scholarship, Herberg’s 1932 account also dramatically breaks from the shallow approach characterising most left-wing accounts up to this time – anticipating contributions that would be made by W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, and others. We also present here the future theologian’s positive review of V.F. Calverton’s attempt at a Marxist critique of religion, and the second and third segments of his far more substantial seven-part series on Fascism and its embryonic forms in the United States.

1 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were among the first to pose the question, in material touched on by Lovestone and Wolfe, and presented in Romyantseva (ed.) 1979. The question was raised in a sustained manner in 1906 by Werner Sombart (Sombart 1976), which was immediately utilised by Karl Kautsky in his pioneering review-essay, ‘The American Worker’, reprinted in Kautsky 2003; also see Le Blanc 2003. Another influential work dealing with this question is Perlman 1928. Also relevant are Lipset and Marks 2000 and Foner 2002, pp. 110–48.

Re-examining Marxism (Items Six–Nine)

The Lovestoneites and their milieu (which included the prominent US Marxist theorist Lewis Corey) entered the year 1940 in a state of growing disillusionment. Things had turned out far differently than they had anticipated, and they felt the need to re-examine the theoretical orientation that had failed to preserve them from a sense of political disorientation. Lewis Corey had initiated such a re-examination in a three-part series that appeared in the pages of the left-liberal weekly magazine, *The Nation*,² and also in a talk at a public forum of the Lovestone group, presented here. Corey's thoughtful and optimistic engagement with the question of how a socialist democracy could be structured was combined with a fundamental questioning of Marxism's revolutionary-strategic orientation and its emphasis on the working class as the primary agency for bringing about social change. Another forum was organised by the group on 26 April, summarised in an article reproduced here, in which Corey repeated his arguments and the group's most prominent theorists responded. Bertram Wolfe's remarks – while treading lightly on the matter of working-class centrality and speaking of socialism as a 'vague and tentative' vision, overall rallied to the defence of Marxism, and sought to utilise it in offering a critical analysis of what had happened in the Soviet Union. Will Herberg was also inclined to defend Marxism, but with ethical-existentialist caveats and with a new critical distancing from Lenin (whom he was now, to some extent, lumping together with Trotsky, in an uncomplimentary manner).

The *Workers' Age* report on this symposium emphasises the 'free, undogmatic and critical' atmosphere of the discussion, characterised by 'serious thought, penetration and insight'. But the question also naturally arises – would it be possible for the uncertainties embedded in the responses of Marxism's defenders to provide an orientation that could sustain the kind of activist organisation that the Lovestone group had once aspired to be?



2 'Marxism Reconsidered', 17 February, 24 February, 2 March 1940.

Applying Marxism



1. Some Specific Features of the Labor Movement in America³

Jay Lovestone

The founders of the international revolutionary movement long ago realized the significance and the potentialities of the American working class. Engels, in a letter to Mrs. Wischnewetzky (Florence Kelley) on 3 June 1886, wrote: 'The breaking out of class war in America would be for the bourgeoisie of the whole world what the breakdown of Russian Czarism would be for the great monarchs of Europe – the snapping of their mainstay'.

The history of the American labor movement has proved the essential correctness of this analysis and perspective.

Some Specific Features of the American Labor Movement

The international revolutionary leaders have always recognised the special conditions under which the American trade-union and labor movements have developed. Contrary to the average notion that Marxism is dogmatism and that Marx, Engels and Lenin were 'prophets', it is well to emphasise for general consumption and for particular notice by formal Communists that the founders and builders of scientific socialism specifically warned against turning working-class theory 'into a dogma, into a petrified orthodoxy, into a symbol of belief', instead of using it as a 'guide to action'. In line with this approach, let us suggest some of the concrete features peculiar to the development of the American labor movement.

1. The continued availability of free land, up to as late a date as the close of the [nineteenth] century, meant that there was no serious feudal background in this country. Instead of rebelling against the first life-sapping effects

3 Lovestone 1932, pp. 3–7.

of capitalist industry, as the European workers did, the most dissatisfied and militant American workers could take the path of the pioneer, go to the free land and become independent producers. The role of the frontier in American labor history cannot be overestimated.

2. The development of United States imperialism towards the dominating position in the world market greatly influenced the development of the American working class. American labor, in its smug detachment from international working-class problems, has, to no small extent, been influenced by the bourgeois notion of 'happy isolation'. Before the working class in the United States had had a chance to develop homogeneity, comparable to that developed by the continental European proletariat, it was split in two by imperialism: into the labor aristocracy, who shared in the super-profit, and the great bulk of the working class, the unskilled, semi-skilled, who were shut off from all such privileges. We will elaborate this point further.

3. As a result of this split, American labor history is, in certain fundamental respects, analogous to British labor history. In the United States, as in England, the trade unions were formed before a movement towards a national political party of labor had gotten under way. In continental Europe, the political labor parties came first and the trade unions were organized directly by them. This in continental-European countries, because there was no such split of the working class in the beginning, the political parties were the first expression of organized labor. Note how the Social-Democratic Party of Germany controls the trade-union movement, whereas in England, where the trade unions were organized first, they control the Labor Party. In this country, the split brought on by imperialism, before the definite crystallization of the working class, also resulted in only sectional organization of the workers – that is, into trade unions.

4. The social composition of the American working class has certain distinct features, certain special peculiarities. It has never been homogeneous but is sharply divided into Negro and white, native and foreign-born, skilled and unskilled, labor aristocrats and unprivileged. The United States has a bigger and more corrupt labor aristocracy than any other country. In America, more sharply than anywhere else, has the gap between the skilled and unskilled expressed itself in the standards of living and in political and social rights.

5. The absence of a strong Social-Democratic Party, or a mass labor party, is peculiar to the United States.

6. The trade-union movement, even to the limited extent of its organization, has not succeeded in winning a foothold in the basic industries, such as steel and oil, which are unorganized, and it is losing much of its influence in mining and the railways.

7. In the basic industries of the United States, as nowhere else in the world, monopoly is so dominant that the machinery of business and the apparatus of the government are merged into an industrial feudalism. Witness the coal and iron towns where the companies own outright the judges, the police, the church, the schools, the mayors and the jobs. Under such conditions what influence can the archaic craft unions of the American Federation of Labor hope to wield?

8. In the United States, more than in any other capitalist country, rationalization of industry (i.e., scientific management) has meant for the working class intense exploitation, industrial accidents, rapid aging, stultifying monotony, and life-sapping speed-up.

9. In no other highly developed capitalist country is there such a general absence of social legislation as in the United States.

10. It is no accident that, with all this challenge to the working class, there is a complete absence of any contribution to working-class theory by the American labor movement. Instead, there is even an attitude of contempt for such theory.

Further Analysis of the Specific Features

It is impossible in this place to elaborate on all of the ten points which I have suggested for the readers' consideration. I shall limit myself to three questions which seem to me decisive.

1. Why was trade unionism and not a political party the first expression of labor organization in the United States?
2. Why has the American working class evinced no interest in social-economic theory such as is shown in Europe?
3. Why is there no labor party in the United States?

Why was Trade Unionism and Not a Political Party the First Expression of Labor Organization in the United States?

We have already touched upon this. Before class lines had a chance to harden in this country, before ever the proletariat could consolidate itself as a class to the extent that it had in the older countries, in the continental countries of Europe, the mighty surge of imperialism cleaved the tenuous bonds of working-class solidarity, lifting on its crest the best organized groups of workers and separating them from the great mass of their fellow workers. The interests of this small group congealed into narrow, selfish, craft channels, distinct from, and hostile to, the general stream of basic fundamental working-class

interests. Thus the dominant labor organization today is, frankly, still based on organization by crafts instead of by industry, and effectively excludes workers through such devices as exorbitant initiation fees and high dues, color prejudice and apprentice rules.

Why has the American Working Class Evincd No Interest in Social-Economic Theory such as is Shown in Europe?

There are two reasons for this. America, without any serious feudal background, was more free to concentrate on practical work and the accumulation of capital. In this set-up, without any accumulation of traditions but with increasing emphasis on practical activity, the working class naturally reflects a contempt for theorizing, generalizing and abstractions and limits its learning to its own concrete experiences. What is working-class theory? It is the crystallised expression of the general interests and tactics of the working class. No contributions to proletarian theory can be expected from a working class which is not yet conscious of its existence as a class. The lack of working-class homogeneity in the United States is obviously due to such special factors as differences in color, race, nationality and, in another category, differences arising from position in industry, such as skilled and unskilled, the labor aristocrat and laborer. As the American working class develops homogeneity, as its divisions are overcome and as it begins to fight for its *general* interests, we can expect that it will change its attitude on theory and will make contributions to the science of the international revolutionary struggle. So a functional change will lead to a change in *Anschaung* – general conception.

Why is there No Labor Party in the United States?

The American working class has been the most politically backward, the most conservative, the least class-conscious of any proletariat in the world. Bourgeois spokesmen and academic leaders have hailed this as a special American virtue. At one time they could say 'Anglo-Saxon workers are different'. But since English workers have shown such class consciousness, have given 'so much trouble', the capitalists now confine their praise to the American workers. A more objective analysis of this special American 'virtue' of labor conservatism would lead to the dominant economic position of United States imperialism as the explanation. Wall Street imperialism has for years been able to gather such huge super-profits that it could afford to corrupt a substantial section of the working class with crumbs, sugar plums. Even the American working class as a whole has enjoyed a generally higher standard of living than prevails in other capitalists countries.

The seduction of the most organizationally experienced workers deprived the working class of some of its best trained forces, split in two, and thus hampered the organization of the workers into a united class party which would defend and represent their general, their political interests.

2. The Heritage of the Civil War⁴

Will Herberg

The best representatives of the American proletariat are those expressing the revolutionary tradition in the life of the American people. This tradition originated in the war of liberation against the English in the 18th century and in the Civil War in the 19th century . . . Where can you find an American so pedantic, so absolutely idiotic as to deny the revolutionary and progressive significance of the American Civil War of 1860–65?⁵

—LENIN

The attitude of the various classes of a society to the critical periods of its history is often a decisive index of the stage these classes have reached in their social life-cycle, of their relations among themselves and to society as a whole. It is altogether symptomatic of the thorough inner decay of the bourgeoisie today that it openly rejects and belies all that is great, vital and progressive in American history, or else distorts it beyond recognition. It is no less characteristic of the historical immaturity of the American proletariat and of the lack of firm roots of its advanced sections in the best traditions of our people that this class, which should be the 'true guardian' of all that is revolutionary in the past, is completely without any appreciation of its mission in this respect and has never yet challenged the historical judgments of the class enemy. But it is the radical intellectuals, by 'nature', so to speak, in living contact with vital historical tradition, who have failed most miserably and have thereby exposed their own shallowness and lack of penetrating social comprehension. For, with a few notable exceptions, the radical intellectuals have no new word to say; they either deny any significant bond with the past or else echo helplessly and confusedly the reactionary falsifications of the bourgeoisie.

4 Herberg 1932, pp. 54–61; reprinted from the *Modern Quarterly*, Summer 1932, in which it appeared under the title of 'The Civil War In New Perspective'.

5 *Editors' note*: a somewhat different translation of this passage from 'Letter to American Workers' can be found in Lenin 1960–79d, p. 68.

Take that heroic period of American history usually recognised under the conventional rubrics of the 'abolition movement', the 'Civil War' and 'Reconstruction', but which really forms one organic epoch. The great traditions of this period – and especially of Reconstruction – are shamelessly repudiated by the official heirs of Stevens and Sumner. In the last quarter of a century hardly a single book has appeared consistently championing or sympathetically interpreting the great ideals of the crusade against slavery, whereas scores and hundreds have dropped from the presses in ignoble 'extenuation' of the North, in open apology of the Confederacy, in measureless abuse of the radical figures of Reconstruction. The Reconstruction period, as the logical culmination of decades of previous development, has borne the brunt of the reaction. The 'classical' American historians (typified by Rhodes) have pictured it as an unpleasant episode intelligible only in terms of 'war-time passions' and 'party politics'. The avowedly pro-Southern historians, beginning with Dunning, treat the period of Reconstruction as the original sin, the source of all evil in post-Civil War American life. The 'liberal' historians (Beard) exhibit an incredible shallowness and vulgarity of historical judgment which are reflected in the works of the so-called 'Marxist' historians (Simons, Oneal, Bimba).

How great the confusion is can be indicated by an example. In an essay on Lowell in the recent collection, *American Writers on American Literature*, Robert Morss Lovett speaks with disgust of the 'envenomed fanaticism of Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens' and declares with conviction that 'Johnson and Seward were wisely carrying out Lincoln's policy of Reconstruction'. Professor Lovett is an extreme liberal, perhaps even a radical – yet his historical judgments coincide perfectly with those of the avowed apologists of the old slaveocracy, of the pseudo-aristocracy built on the toil and blood of millions of black slaves!

A revaluation of this, as of all other periods of American history, is a real intellectual need of the day. And such a revaluation is possible only from the vantage of the revolutionary-proletarian viewpoint, by means of the historical dialectics of Marxism.

The American Civil War came as the climax of decades of profound economic conflicts and social struggles. 'The present struggle between the South and the North', wrote Marx⁶ in 1861, 'is . . . nothing but a struggle between two social systems, the system of slavery and the system of free labor. Because the two systems can no longer live peaceably side by side on the North American

6 Karl Marx, 'The Civil War in the United States', in the *Vienna Presse*, 7 November 1861. *Editors' note*: this can be found, with a somewhat different translation, in Marx 1975–2004b, pp. 43–52.

continent, the struggle has broken out'. This 'irrepressible conflict', which manifested itself in a clash between the agrarian slaveowners and industrial bourgeoisie, came to expression in the battle over the limitation of slave territory – over the West, in other words. 'The contest for the territories which opened the dire epopee, was it not to decide whether the virgin soil of immense tracts should be wedded to the labor of the immigrant or prostituted to the tramp of the slaveowners?'⁷ But 'the continual expansion of territory and the continual spread of slavery over and beyond its old boundaries (were) the life principles of the slave states of the Union'⁸ and so the struggle over the West was in the profoundest sense a struggle over the very existence of the slave system as such.

The contest over slavery penetrated into all spheres of national life. It was a struggle over labor and democracy as well. When Marx⁹ declared that, were it allowed to maintain its existence, the 'slave system would infect the whole union... In the Northern states, where slavery is practically unfeasible, the white working class would gradually be pressed down to the level of helotism', he was merely drawing the obvious lesson from the repeated declarations of the slaveowning oligarchs who, through Governor McDuffie of South Carolina, pronounced the 'laboring population, bleached or unbleached, a dangerous element in the body politic'¹⁰ and, through Edward Everett, their Northern apologist, announced that 'the great relation of servitude in some form or other... is inseparable from our nature'.¹¹ The thoroughly anti-democratic sentiments of the slaveowners were later fully exposed in the Confederate constitution, the work of their own hands. 'A closer examination of the history of the secession movement', wrote Marx, 'shows that the secession constitution is all usurpation... Nowhere did they allow the people to vote en masse... It was not only a question of secession from the North but also of the consolidation and sharpening of the power of the oligarchy of the 300,000 slaveowners against the five million whites of the South'.¹²

7 'Address of the International Workingmen's Association to President Lincoln, published 23 December 1864; written by Marx. *Editors' note*: this can be found, with a somewhat different translation, in Marx 1975–2004c, pp. 19–21.

8 Karl Marx, 'The Civil War in North America', in the *Vienna Presse*, 25 October, 1861. *Editors' note*: this can be found, with somewhat different translation, under the title 'The North American Civil War' (Marx 1975–2004d, pp. 32–42).

9 Marx 1975–2004b.

10 Wilson 1900, p. 325.

11 Wilson 1900, p. 329.

12 *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Engels und Marx*, vol. 3, p. 26. Letter of Marx of 1 July 1861. *Editors' note*: for a slightly different translation, see Rumyanatseva (ed.) 1979, p. 176.

The great struggle went through many stages before it finally climaxed in war. Until its very last phase, the objective significance of the movement – the eradication of slavery – remained quite outside the historical field of vision of the Northern bourgeoisie as a whole, although it was far more obvious to the Southern slaveowners. The class as a class trod the path of revolution with the hesitating steps of petty compromise and political bargaining. Even during the war, Marx branded Lincoln's actions as having 'the appearance of illiberal stipulated conditions which an attorney presents to an opponent'. But, he added, 'this does not interfere with their historic content'.¹³

The advance-guard of the bourgeoisie, on the other hand, developed far more rapidly than the class as a whole. It reached a mature stage of historical consciousness relatively early in the struggle. In the Abolitionists, almost exclusively ideologists, this intellectual vanguard found its concrete embodiment.

As a result of inevitable historical conditions, the Abolitionist vanguard arose and developed apart from its class and, at times, even in antagonism to it, the antagonism of the narrow interests of the moment as counterposed to the far-visioned interests of the great historical objective.

The American Abolitionists were typical bourgeois-democratic revolutionists under specific American conditions. They felt their movement linked up with the great humanitarian causes of the day (the 'labor question', the 'peace question', the emancipation of women, temperance, philanthropy) and with the bourgeois-revolutionary movement in Europe. 'He hailed the revolution (of 1848) in France', Moorfield Storey¹⁴ tells of Sumner, 'and similar outbreaks in other countries as parts of the great movement for freedom, of which the anti-slavery agitation in America was another part'.

Their inevitable isolation from their class and, above all, from the masses of the people, their ideological introversion and self-sufficiency, gave the Abolitionists a distinctly mystical-utopian, anarchistic and pacifistic cast in outlook. In a very real sense the Abolitionists were the legitimate bearers of the 'generous purpose of transcendentalism; they were also closely associated with the Utopian socialist movements of the 1840's. Side by side with the radical Utopians, there made themselves felt in the ranks of the Abolitionists a terrorist, insurrectionary wing (John Brown) as well as a parliamentary political tendency' (Sumner).¹⁵

13 *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Engels und Marx.*, vol. 3, p. 96. Letter of Marx of 29 October 1862. *Editors' note:* for a slightly different translation, see Romyanatseva (ed.) 1979, p. 193.

14 Storey 1900, p. 61. It is also interesting to note the later connections between the Radicals and the Irish national revolutionaries, the Fenians.

15 See my article, 'Communists and Abolitionists', *Workers Age*, 9 April 1932.

It is now a century since the first heroic efforts were made to organize the Abolition movement in this country in the face of a hostile, or at best indifferent, public sentiment. It was in the 1830s that the various local Anti-Slavery Societies, especially the New York and New England organizations, were formed and later united in the American Anti-Slavery Society. American Marxism certainly owes a critical-historical study of the whole movement to the revolutionary traditions of our people.

The inevitable march of events soon brought on the Civil War. 'From resistance to the slave power', the North moved onto 'death to slavery'.¹⁶ But the Civil War cannot be studied in isolation. The Civil War and the Reconstruction period form an organic unity; they both constitute essentially a bourgeois revolution in two stages: first, the defeat of the armed counterrevolution of the slaveowners (the Civil War) and, secondly, the attempt to draw all the historically necessary consequences, economic, political, and social, of this defeat of the counterrevolution (the Reconstruction period). In spite of the highly specific form which this bourgeois revolution assumed in this country,¹⁷ its essential and fundamental aims were still those of the classical bourgeois-democratic revolution: the national consolidation of the country (the defeat of secession and of 'States' Rights'), the thorough eradication of all pre-capitalist economic forms (abolition of slavery), the destruction of the political power of the aristocracy (disfranchisement of the former slaveowners and rebels), the advance of democracy (the enfranchisement of the Negroes and of the poor whites in the South), the agrarian revolution (the Radical plan of confiscating the lands of the former slaveowners for distribution among the emancipated slaves), etc. Nor can the strict analogy be overlooked between the military dictatorship established by the Jacobins in the reactionary rural departments of France and the military rule of the South during Reconstruction. The general historical form is the same, however different may be the external aspects of the specific episodes. How profoundly similar in historical content and even in significant phraseology was the Civil War to the classical bourgeois-democratic revolution can be seen from this thoroughly characteristic utterance of the great Radical leader, Thad Stevens:

16 Address of the International Workingmen's Association to President Lincoln, published December 23, 1864, written by Marx. *Editors' note*: for a slightly different translation, see Rumyantseva (ed.) 1979, p. 168.

17 A quite similar type of bourgeois revolution took place in Switzerland in The War of Secession of 1847 (the *Sonderbund* war).

It is intended to revolutionize their (the South's) principles and feelings . . . to work a radical reorganization in Southern institutions, habits, and manners . . . The whole fabric of Southern society must be changed, and it never can be done if this opportunity is lost . . . How can republican institutions, free schools, free churches, free social intercourse, exist in a mingled community of nabobs and serfs; of the owners of twenty thousand acre manors with lordly palaces and the occupants of narrow huts inhabited by 'low white trash'? If the South is ever to be made a safe republic let her lands be cultivated by the toil of the owners or the free labor of intelligent citizens. This must be done even though it drives her nobility into exile! If they go, all the better. It will be hard to persuade the owner of ten thousand acres of land, who drives a coach and four, that he is not degraded by sitting at the same table or in the same pew, with the embrowned and hard-handed farmer who has himself cultivated his own thriving homestead of 150 acres. The country would be well rid of the proud, bloated and defiant rebels . . . The foundations of their institutions . . . must be broken up and relaid, or all our blood and treasure have been spent in vain.¹⁸

Our 'liberal' historians, whose vulgar philistinism is equalled only by the narrow-mindedness of those 'Marxian' historians who echo them, stand puzzled, even aghast, before the great events of this heroic period and are able only to mumble some platitudinous phrases about 'corruption' and 'greed'! Of course, there was corruption and greed – and on an almost incredible scale too! But after all it was a bourgeois revolution operating on the sacrosanct level of private property and private appropriation. Whatever the fatal finger of private property touches, it corrupts! Nevertheless, mankind is profoundly interested that, in the struggle between the lower and higher forms of private property (forms of exploitation), the latter should emerge victorious, for their victory signifies the final relegation to the scrap-heap of history of much that is out-lived and reactionary in the institutions of society and a great step forward along the road towards the eventual emancipation of the human race from every form of exploitation and oppression. 'I naturally see what is repulsive in the form of the Yankee movement', wrote Marx,¹⁹ 'but I find the reason for

18 Speech at Lancaster, Pa., 7 September 1865.

19 *Briefwechsel* etc., vol. 3, p. 96. Letter of 29 October 1862. It should be recalled also that the great orgy of corruption in the post-Civil War days came with the triumph of the Conservatives and as a preparatory phase of it. Engels (Anti-Dühring) speaks of the 'swindle and speculation flourishing in the decline of the revolution'. *Editors' note*: for

it in the nature of a bourgeois democracy . . . where swindle has been on the sovereign throne for so long. Nevertheless the events are world upheaving . . .'

'Two paths and two outcomes are possible in every bourgeois revolution':²⁰ the radical (Jacobin) and the conservative (Girondin) roads. The struggle between these two courses forms the essential content of the whole Reconstruction period. At first the Radical course had the upper hand and it looked as if the bourgeois-democratic revolution would be carried through to its ultimate conclusion. Then came a period of vacillation. Finally the Conservative course (outlined by Lincoln and championed by Johnson) emerged triumphant. The Negro slave was indeed legally emancipated but he was not transformed into a free (in the bourgeois sense) proletarian or independent peasant-proprietor. No; the slave status gave way, before a new semi-servile status, a *caste status* in which the American Negro has labored ever since.

To what must the triumph of the Conservatives and the frustration and distortion of the democratic revolution be attributed? Not merely to the resistance of the still powerful ruling class of the South but also to the inner weakness of the Northern capitalist class itself, within which there emerged powerful reactionary elements. Several factors, closely intertwined, played a decisive part in bringing about this turn of events: the role of the West, the effect of the tremendous expansion of Northern capitalism and the retreat of the more conservative sections of the bourgeoisie before the ultimate implications of the democratic revolution carried through to completion.

The unhampered and unrestrained exploitation of the West became the absorbing object of the decisive sections of the Northern bourgeoisie, especially the financiers and merchants – had not the struggle over the West played the leading role in precipitating the war? On the basis of the decisive victory of the industrial bourgeoisie through the Civil War, an unprecedented expansion of industry, commerce and finance along strictly capitalist lines began, in the course of which the Federal government was converted into a most energetic and avowed champion of the economic interests of the industrial bourgeoisie (tariff, resumption of specie payment, grants to railroads and other corporations etc.). The tremendous upsurge of capitalism did not proceed along the lines of the industrialization ('bourgeoisification') of the South (industrialization here had to wait until the 1890s for a real start); it was almost entirely

slightly different translations, see Rumyantseva (ed.) 1979, p. 193, and Engels 1975–2004b, p. 248.

20 Two Tactics of the Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution, by V.I. Lenin. *Editors' note*: We have been unable to find the exact wording Herberg attributes to Lenin, but the conceptions Herberg utilises here are presented in Lenin 1960–79f, pp. 55–60.

absorbed in the economic expansion of the North and in the West. And for the free exploitation of the West, for unhampered expansion in the North, 'peace' in the rear was necessary. The 'disturbed condition' of the South, the natural consequence of any serious attempt at a revolutionary transformation of the Southern order, must be ended, of course through a compromise with the ex-slaveowners at the expense of the Negro freedmen, the masses of the poor white Southern population and the interests of the country as a whole.

Furthermore the radicalism of the Radicals was beginning to go much too far to suit the money lords and merchant princes. Just as the conservative sections of the French bourgeoisie recoiled at the 'excesses' of the Jacobin radicals, so did these gentlemen draw back in consternation at the agrarianism, equalitarianism and 'violence' of the Radicals. Marx has called attention to the fact that 'Mr. Wade [a leading Radical, president of the Senate – W.H.] declared in public meetings that after the abolition of slavery, a radical change in the relations of capital and of property in land is next upon the order of the day'.²¹

Henry Cooke, of the notorious banking firm of Jay Cooke, wrote:

You know how I have felt for a long time, in regard to the course of the ultra-infidelic radicals like Wade, Sumner, Stevens et id omne genus. They were dragging the Republican party into all sorts of isms and extremes. Their policy was one of bitterness, hate and wild agrarianism. These reckless demagogues have had their day and the time has come for wiser counsel. With Wade uttering agrarian doctrines in Kansas and fanning the flames of vulgar prejudices, trying to array labor against capital and pandering to the basest passions; with Butler urging wholesale conscription throughout the South and whole-sale repudiation throughout the North . . .; with Stevens . . . advocating the idea of a flood of irredeemable paper money . . .; with Pomeroy and Wade and Sprague and a host of others clamoring for the unsexing of woman and putting a ballot in her hand . . . what wonder is it that the accumulated load was too heavy for any party to carry . . .²²

Thus came Thermidor in the second American revolution! Two historical motives are indissolubly fused in every bourgeois revolution: on the one hand, the bourgeoisie ruthlessly clears the way of all pre-capitalist forms, of all 'remnants of feudalism'; on the other, with the newly won state power as a lever, it

²¹ *Capital*, by Karl Marx. Preface to the first edition. *Editors' note*: for a slightly different translation, see Marx 1977, p. 93.

²² Oberholtzer 1907, p. 23.

stimulates powerfully the accumulation of capital (which takes on the aspect of a primitive accumulation) as well as the expansion of the capitalist mode of production as a whole. The contradictory character of capitalism is reflected in the deeply contradictory mode of development of these two motives which are nevertheless inseparable. The former involves the progressive movement of the bourgeoisie, supported by the petty-bourgeois strata and the proletariat, against the feudal elements (land-owning aristocrats, slaveowners, etc.); the latter, the reactionary movement of the bourgeoisie, now frequently supported by the pillars of the old regime, against the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat. In the American Civil War, because of the specific form and circumstance under which the bourgeois revolution took place (its relative 'lateness' historically), the second motive was dominant almost from the very beginning. For the Northern bourgeoisie, Reconstruction became more and more a question of maintaining its hold (through the Republican Party) over the government, especially the Federal government, and less and less a question of transforming the South economically and socially. Since the genuine Radical course greatly emphasised the latter, indeed made it the very center of its program, the Northern bourgeoisie quickly liquidated Radicalism as such, although retaining the old name and many of the phrases for campaign use. That is the reason why so many of the old Abolitionists and Radicals, typified by Sumner, ultimately broke with the Republican Party altogether. Under Grant it was already no longer the party of Stevens and Wade and Sumner. It is well known how sharply Sumner criticised Grant and his administration for their indifferent attitude towards the fundamental problems in the real emancipation of the black man.

In a very real sense, the Radical course was defeated when the Northern bourgeoisie finally rejected the plan of confiscating the large estates of the ex-slaveowners for distribution among the freedmen and the poor Unionist whites of the South, for, without land emancipation, was robbed of its economic foundation.²³ 'We do not confiscate loyal men, nor rebels unless they are rich,'

23 It is interesting to see how clearly the then radical Georges Clemenceau, in America as correspondent of the Paris *Temps*, understood this. On 26 September 1865, he wrote (American Reconstruction, 1865–1870): 'The real misfortune of the Negro race is in owning no land of its own. There cannot be real (read: bourgeois – W.H.) emancipation for men who do not possess at least a small portion of the soil . . . In spite of the war, and the confiscation bills, which remain dead letters, every inch of the land in the Southern states belongs to the former rebels . . . It would be too much to expect those masters of their own accord to conciliate the Negroes by conceding them a little land . . .'

Stevens wrote to a Southerner²⁴ and previously he had declared: 'Forty acres of land and a hut would be more valuable to the freedman than the immediate right to vote'.²⁵ Sumner too appreciated the supreme significance of land for the freedman. 'Sumner felt that without education or land the freedmen would be at the mercy of their former masters', his biographer tells us.²⁶ But the Northern bourgeoisie as a class never seriously intended to carry through such a revolutionary course as the confiscation of the land; it was already far too conservative for such heroic measures, the threat of agrarianism in the West and of the rising labor movement in the North was already too great. The bourgeoisie turned sharply to the right and Radical Reconstruction was lost!

Very few at the time really appreciated how lost the Radical cause was, for the old phrases were still current. But Thad Stevens was among the few. Already in 1866, Stevens saw what was ahead. In the House he made one of the most powerful and most pathetic speeches of his career: 'In my youth', so runs the report of his speech in the Congressional Globe of 4 June 1866, 'in manhood, and in old age, I had fondly dreamed that when any fortunate chance broke up for a while the foundations of our institutions', they would be remodelled 'as to have freed them of every vestige of human oppression, of inequality of rights, of recognized degradation of the poor and the superior caste of the rich . . . This bright dream has vanished like the baseless fabric of a vision. I find that we shall be obliged to be content with patching up the worst portions of the ancient edifice and leaving it in many of its parts to be swept thru by the tempests, the frosts, and the storms of despotism'. But content he was not . . .

Far away in London, Karl Marx saw and fully understood the signs of the times. On 24 June 24 1865, only a few months after the new President had assumed office, Marx wrote to Engels:

Johnson's policy disturbs me. Ridiculous affectation of severity against individual persons; up to now highly vacillating and weak in the thing itself. The reaction has already begun in America and will soon be strengthened if this spinelessness is not put an end to.²⁷

And 13 years later, on 25 July 1877, he signalled the consummation of the historical betrayal of the Northern bourgeoisie and the Republican Party in these

²⁴ *New York World*, 10 June 1867.

²⁵ Speech in House of Representatives, May 1866.

²⁶ Storey 1900, p. 332.

²⁷ *Briefwechsel*, etc., vol. 3. *Editors' note*: for a slightly different translation, see Rumyanatseva (ed.) 1979, p. 211.

words: 'The policy of the new president (Hayes) will make the Negroes, and the great expropriations of land in favor of the railways, mining companies, etc... will make the already dissatisfied farmers into allies of the working class'.²⁸

For the last fifty years it has been the fashion among historians to represent the Reconstruction governments of the Southern states in the grossest caricature, as grotesque monstrosities, as veritable nightmares of corruption, oppression and intrigue. Such shameful falsification must be destroyed. These governments, based upon the upsurging political activity of the newly emancipated slaves led by Northern men ('carpetbaggers') and some Southern white Radicals ('scalawags'), certainly did not compare in courtly grace and aristocratic pretension with the pre-war governments of the slaveowners. A people suddenly awakened to freedom is likely to be somewhat careless of political conventions, somewhat irregular in political behaviour, somewhat impetuous in political life. Gross 'excesses' are natural and inevitable, and only narrow-minded philistines will whiningly echo the enraged howls of the dispossessed oppressors. Yet, when we come to examine them, the charges made by such men as Rhodes, Oberholtzer, Dunning, Bowers etc., even if taken at their face value, which they assuredly should not be, are charges that might with equal force be levelled against every government, Federal, state and municipal, North and South, Republican and Democratic, of the time – and against the 'lily-white' Restoration governments that followed in the South with the reaction. Only compare the public moneys stolen by officers of the Reconstruction governments with the vast sums that found their way into the pockets of the Tweed Ring in the perfectly Conservative, Democratic, Copperhead City of New York!

The great significance of the Reconstruction governments lies in their positive revolutionary work. It was these governments that smashed, temporarily at least, the incredibly vicious 'Black Codes'. DuBois very correctly emphasises that 'in legislating concerning property, the wider functions of the state, the punishment of crime, and the like, it is sufficient to say that the laws on these points established by the Reconstruction legislatures were not only very different from but even revolutionary to the laws in the older South'.²⁹

It must not be forgotten that it was the Reconstruction governments – the despised Negro-carpetbagger-scalawag regime – that established democratic government in the South, that enfranchised the poor whites, who had been

28 *Briefwechsel*, etc., vol. 4. *Editors' note*: for a slightly different translation, see Rumyanatseva (ed.) 1979, p. 272.

29 Du Bois 1915, p. 220.

deprived of their right to vote and of many civil liberties in the old South because of their poverty, that set up a free public school system where public education had been largely unknown, that 'abolished the whipping-post, the branding-iron, the stocks, and other barbaric modes of punishment' (Tourgee), that 'reduced capital felonies from about twenty to three', that broke the ground in the way of social legislation. Speaking of the Reconstruction conventions, Oberholtzer is forced to admit:

The various assemblies had much in common. It was said of them truly by a conservative in Louisiana that they were agrarian and revolutionary. Our own and the French Revolutions had not yielded more prolific discussion of the subject of freedom and equality, the 'inherent right of suffrage' under a republican form of government, the 'God-given and sacred right' to vote, the 'halo of liberty', which, henceforward, would surround every human head, especially if it belonged to a poor and ignorant man.³⁰

There were giants in those days because it was an age demanding and creating giants. The great figures that led the Abolitionist and Radical hosts in desperate battle deserve the profoundest respect of the revolutionist of today, of every man who prizes liberty and human progress. Thad Stevens, the indomitable warrior, the Great Commoner, whose badge of honor is the frantic hate that the slaveowners and their spiritual descendants have heaped upon his memory for generations; Charles Sumner, the incorruptible, the incarnate heart and conscience of the nation, holding ideals and principles far above party and place; Wendell Phillips, the fiery-tongued Abolitionist, the invincible tribune of the friendless and the oppressed, the living bond between yesterday and today, between the war against chattel-slavery and the struggle against capitalist wage-slavery. To the revolutionists of today belongs their tradition and not to the lily-white party of Hoover the slave-trader!

We are the truer guardians – let us claim our heritage!

³⁰ Oberholtzer 1936, p. 37.

3. Marx and America³¹

Bertram D. Wolfe

The 'Discovery' of America

To tell the truth, the Germans have not been able to use their theory (Marxism – B.D.W.) as a lever to set the American masses in motion. To a great extent they do not understand the theory themselves and treat it in a doctrinaire and dogmatic fashion as if it were something which must be committed to memory, and which then suffices for all purposes without further ado. For them it is a credo, not a guide for action.³²

So wrote Engels to Sorge in 1886, indignant at the mechanical and doctrinaire fashion in which the German 'Marxist' immigrants were transplanting to America the formulae and methods appropriate to the German working class.

Marxism, as the theory and practice of the class struggle, has nothing in common with sectarianism. It is no dogma but a guide to action. It envisages not the logic-chopping, creed-reciting and conceit of sterile sects, but the action of great masses, of an entire class and its allies. The interests of the masses are its starting point; the action of masses its driving force, and indissoluble connection with the masses is the condition of its growth and the law of its being. 'Theory becomes a material force as soon as it takes possession of the masses'. Such is Marx's own conception of the Marxian theory.

Marx and 'Exceptionalism'

Why did the American 'Marxists' of German origin fail to influence and lead the young American working class just beginning to feel its power and to organize on a national scale in the last quarter of the nineteenth century? Primarily

³¹ Wolfe 1934a, pp. 5–10, 18–20, 31–2.

³² *Editors' note:* for a slightly different translation, see Rumyanatseva (ed.) 1979, pp. 311–12.

because they failed utterly to make a realistic analysis of American conditions, of the specific national characteristics and peculiarities of the country in which they sought to give their correct general theory concrete application. They never even raised the question of 'American peculiarities', except in the sense of abusing and condemning the American working class, whose movement they were seeking to fashion and lead. Yet the general theory of Marxism is the result of vast powers of generalization distilled from the investigation of concrete reality and becomes a guide to action only in so far as it is concretely applied to concrete situations realistically grasped and analysed. The strategy and tactics of class war, like strategy and tactics generally, require not only a training in 'military science' or theory, but also a detailed knowledge of the terrain in which it is to be applied, as well as the forces with which it works and with which it has to contend.

This requires, in the first place, an analysis of the special development and peculiar features of American capitalism, and in this sense, except for fragmentary hints from the pens of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and partial beginnings made recently by certain American Marxians, the development of 'American Marxism' (in the sense of the application of Marxian theory to the analysis of American conditions) has scarcely begun. In fact, the official theoreticians of American communism do not at present seem to grasp the necessity for such an analysis, and condemn the very planting of the problem as 'American exceptionalism'. Yet this so-called 'exceptionalism' is of the essence of Marxism and the 'arch-exceptionalist' is none other than Marx himself: 'This [the uniformity of a general development which Marx has just discussed – B.D.W.] does not prevent the same economic basis from showing infinite variations and gradations in its appearance, even though its principal conditions are everywhere the same. This is due to innumerable outside circumstances, natural environment, race peculiarities, outside historical influences and so forth, all of which must be ascertained by careful analysis'.³³

And again: 'This is not enough for my critics; they are pleased to transform my historical sketch of the origin of capitalism in Western Europe into a general historical-philosophical theory, claiming to prescribe an unchangeable course of development for all peoples without any consideration for the special conditions of their historical existence'.³⁴

33 Marx *Capital* Volume III, p. 919. *Editors' note*: for a slightly different translation, see Marx 1981, pp. 927–8.

34 Letter to Michailovsky. *Editors' note*: this is from a letter written in November 1877, and can be found in a somewhat different translation in Marx and Engels 1965, p. 313.

There are no major writings of Marx dealing specifically with America. He was primarily absorbed in the centers of European revolutionary development in his time, Germany and France; and for an analysis of capitalism in its 'pure' (i.e. most developed and therefore most revealing) form, his laboratory was England. His interest in America, especially prior to the Civil War, was primarily an interest in the effect of American events upon European development, and it was only after the removal of the First International to America and the development of the strike waves of the late 1880s and 1890s that there are any recommendations on tactical questions of the American movement from the pens of Marx and Engels. . . .

The American Labor Movement

No permanent labor movement was formed in America until after the Civil War. The various workingmen's parties that flourished for brief intervals prior to that were diverted into popular reform movements for universal suffrage and free public education, into agrarian movements for free distribution of small homesteads from the public lands, into the Utopian socialist experiments under petty-bourgeois leadership during the 1830s and 1840s, and the anti-slavery agitation that overwhelmed all other issues in the decade or so prior to the Civil War. But the war brought in its train the rapid distribution of public lands (whole empires to the railroads and homesteads to small farmers and workingmen), the abolition of slavery and the sudden and swift development of great fortunes, a dominant industrial and financial class, and, within a few decades, trustified industry.

The National Labor Union

In the United States of America, any sort of independent labor movement was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the republic. Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded. But out of the death of slavery a new and vigorous life sprang. The first fruit of the Civil War was an agitation for the 8-hour day – a movement which ran with express speed from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California.³⁵

35 Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, p. 309. *Editors' note:* for a slightly different translation, see Marx 1977, p. 414.

In August 1866, the National Labor Union was formed under the leadership of William H. Sylvius, leader and founder of the National Iron Molders Union. One of the acts of the formative convention of the National Labor Union was the proclamation of a fight for the eight-hour day as a first step in a struggle 'to free the labor of this country from capitalistic slavery'.

As president of the National Labor Union, Sylvius answered an address of the First International to the American people in the following terms:

We have a common cause. It is the war of poverty against wealth. . . . In the name of the workingmen of the United States I extend to you . . . the right hand of fellowship. Continue in the good work that you have undertaken until a glorious success shall crown your efforts! Such is our resolve. Our recent war has led to the foundation of the most infamous money aristocracy of the earth. . . . We have declared war against it and we are determined to conquer – by means of the ballot, if possible – if not, we shall resort to more serious means. A little blood-letting is necessary in desperate cases.

Such was the spirit of the outstanding leader of the new movement that had set in motion a wave of eight-hour strikes all over the country. The same leader had declared in a speech to a workers' meeting in Sunbury, Pa., a year earlier (1868):

No man in America rejoiced more than I at the downfall of Negro slavery. But when the shackles fell from the limbs of those four millions of blacks, it did not make them free men; it simply transferred them from one condition of slavery to another. . . . We are now all one family of slaves together, and the labor reform movement is a second emancipation proclamation.

Marx explained this new spirit in terms of the fact that immigration was now depositing workers in the industrial centers faster than the Western lands could drain them off, that the American Civil War had left behind it a colossal debt and taxation burden and had created 'a financial aristocracy of the meanest kind', and that the public lands were being gobbled up by speculators and railway and mining companies at a headlong pace. 'No longer is the Great Republic the promised land for emigrants'.³⁶

36 Marx *Capital* Vol 1, pp. 857–8. *Editors' note:* for a slightly different translation, see Marx 1977, p. 940.

The General Strike of 1877

The National Labor Union, after a meteoric rise, was weakened by the untimely death of Sylvius, absorbed as a political movement into the Greenback-Populist tendency and crushed as a union organization during the depression of 1873. But before the prolonged depression was at an end, the labor movement recovered and began a new series of struggles in 1877. A general railway strike tied up the Baltimore and Ohio and Pennsylvania Railways and spread to the other lines and even to other industries such as the coal mines. For the first time the Federal troops were called out in time of peace to break a strike. The militia was called out in Maryland, Pennsylvania and other states, and in some cases proved 'unreliable', that is, fraternised with the strikers. It was this experience which caused the terrified ruling class to reorganize the militia on the basis of class differentiation (the formation of the 'Diamond' Seventh Regiment dates from this event) and construct numerous strong armories – forts for civil warfare – in the industrial centers. Marx wrote to Engels in July 1877:

What do you think of the workers of the United States? This first explosion against the associated oligarchy of capital, which has arisen since the Civil War, will naturally again be suppressed, but can very well form the point of origin for the constitution of an earnest workers' party. The policy of the new president will make the negroes, and the great expropriations of land . . . will make the farmers! of the West, who are already very dissatisfied, allies of the workers.³⁷

Noteworthy in this letter are the insistence on the need for 'the constitution of an earnest workers' party' and the possibility of an alliance of the working class with the poor farmers and the Negroes. To these and related questions, Engels returned again and again in the letters of the next decade addressed to German Marxist immigrants in America. They formed the center around which the tactical problems of the American Marxists revolved, and still revolve today. . . .

The predictions of Marx and Engels, although with retarded tempo, have all been verified. Industrialization has indeed taken place 'with seven-league boots'; slavery has been abolished; class fluidity has come to an end; the frontier has disappeared; the split between skilled and unskilled, native and foreign, negro and white, is yielding to growing homogeneity; America has ceased to be the 'promised land' for the immigrant; negroes and working farmers are

37 Marx letter to Engels, July 1877. *Editors' note:* for a slightly different translation, see Rumyantseva (ed.) 1979, p. 272.

being radicalised and developing a feeling for the need of alliance with the workers against the 'associated oligarchy of capital'; the Pacific has come to play its prophesied role; America has attained to stormy and contested world hegemony, and a permanent working class has been formed. All the objective conditions are present for the American working class to achieve its historic destiny. Only the subjective factors are still lagging: first, 'the constitution of an earnest workers' party' in the sense of a labor party and union movement 'of practically the whole class of American wage workers'; and, second, the development in its midst, of a 'nucleus' of 'theoretically clear fighters', free from sectarianism and opportunism, who know how to analyse the problems facing the American working class, how 'to accept its actual starting point' and 'work along with the general movement of the working class at every one of its stages without giving up or hiding their own distinct position and organization', who 'understand their own principles' and know how to 'use their theory as a lever to set the American masses in motion' – in short a Marxist Communist Party worthy of the name. To create these subjective conditions, the absorption of the writings of Marx and Engels on America, the developing of their fragmentary hints (fragments of a gigantic structure), the mastery of their method, are an essential aid. Their writings seem strangely fresh today because the suggestions they offered have not yet been accepted, the problems they analysed have not yet been solved. Marxists in America can make no more fitting observation of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Marx than by possessing themselves of that revolutionary heritage and making it their own – their own, and the heritage of the American working class as a whole.

4. The Passing of the Gods³⁸

Will Herberg

Review of Victor Francis Calverton, *The Passing of the Gods*,
New York: Charles Scribner's Sons³⁹

In this work, Calverton combines the elaboration of an essentially new and very fruitful approach to the problem of religion with a consecutive summary of the main results of that social critique of religion which is one of the most characteristic features of modern thought. To paraphrase the Young Hegelians, it is the annihilation of religion through critical social consciousness.

The problem that must face every serious student of the question is: what function has religion exercised that it has persisted as a world force through the ages in spite of its (to us) manifest irrationality? What are the roots of religion and where are they to be sought? What is the nature of the religious mentality? What has been the relation of religion to the general life of mankind? These are some of the questions that this book tries to answer.

Calverton's method of analysis is thoroughly sound, based as it is on historical materialism. 'Religion is not, in my contention', he insists, 'an individual reality but a social experience . . . To understand religion, therefore, one must study not only its psychological characteristics but its sociological origins . . . in order to understand religion, it is necessary to do more than study it as an isolated institution or force; what is more important is to study the interests it has served, the interests which inspired its creation and perpetuated its function'. He also does quite well in defining his subject in such a way as to refer to religion as it has actually appeared in human history and not to the vague 'cosmic religion' of an Einstein, for example, in which the term is used without the slightest regard to its historical content.

38 *Workers Age*, 15 November 1934, p. 7.

39 Calverton 1934.

Approaching the problem from this angle, Calverton comes to the conclusion which is the main thesis of this volume: 'Religion derives its power over the human race by virtue of reading the material interests of man into the scheme of the universe'. Or to put it more concretely – religion has persisted as a world force because it has promised man effective power over his environment, natural and social. On the basis of this, its social function, a many-branched spiritual superstructure has arisen of characteristic beliefs, emotions and usages, a veritable complex of the social consciousness, a 'cultural compulsive', surviving until the present day. This social complex, this compulsive drive to religion, is in its very nature virtually inaccessible to reason; it can be affected only by undermining its social base, by depriving it of the social interests nourishing it. Self-conscious rational action in the field of nature and of society is the antithesis of religion and entirely fatal to it because it robs it of its age-old power function. And self-conscious rational action can be achieved by mankind to a full extent only in a classless socialist society in which man is at last master of his own fate. To this conclusion, explicitly stated, Calverton brings his study.

The fruitfulness of the approach here outlined is attested by the whole book for, with it as a clue, the author traces the various aspects of the problem of religion, piling up a vast amount of anthropological and historical data. In this limited space I can do no more than call attention to the most profound of these studies, the chapter on 'The Ego and the Religious Compulsive', which penetrates searchingly into the spiritual life of man under religion.

This work is bound to take its place immediately as the outstanding discussion of religion from the modern sociological standpoint. Some of its particular conclusions may probably be shaken by subsequent criticism and investigation, but its fundamental thesis, that religion can be understood only if it is conceived as a practical instrument of power in the social life-process of mankind, seems to me to be almost unchallengeable.

And the originality and wealth of illustration with which Calverton develops this theme makes for some exciting reading.

5. Does Fascism Menace America?⁴⁰

Will Herberg

Basic Features of Fascism

As a movement on the way to power, Fascism manifests all the earmarks of its petty-bourgeois origins. It develops as a popular mass movement, primarily of the lower-middle classes, a plebeian movement. It develops as an oppositional mass movement, distinct from and hostile to the established political parties of the old order. It is not merely oppositional in the usual parliamentary sense of the term. It preaches contempt for official legality; it exalts extra-legal violence; and it organizes its own extra-legal private armies (Storm Troops, Fascist Militia), which it employs very effectively for recruiting, for anti-labor terror, and for that 'creation of chaos' that forms so essential an element of Fascist strategy.

Spiritually, Fascism is built on an ideology and a faith, on an organized system of beliefs and hates. The binding ideology of fascism is a mystical nationalism or racialism – at once the exaltation of the obscure, inarticulate reactionary prejudices of the backward middle-class masses; a compensation for their social insufficiency, their collective 'inferiority complex', in present-day society; and a sort of 'harmless' outlet for the stored-up discontent and rebelliousness of the masses. In each of these connections, anti-Semitism naturally plays a central role in the hierarchy of Fascist hates.

Fascist ideology is grounded in cultural reaction and obscurantist mysticism. It exalts instinct and blind faith as against intelligence and reason. It requires a backward-looking historical tradition, appropriately distorted and falsified, from which to draw its reactionary inspiration – the old Roman Empire for Italian Fascism and Medieval Germany or primitive Teutonic paganism for Nazism.

40 (Parts two and three). *Workers Age*, 10 February 1940, p. 3; *Workers Age*, 17 February 1940, p. 4.

Fascism fuses with its appeal to blood, race and nation a characteristic pseudo-‘radical’ demagogy, taking its color from the conditions amidst which it develops. In Germany, it appeared as a ‘national socialism’; in Italy as a ‘national syndicalism’; but everywhere it is a reckless hodge-podge of crackpot Utopias, Salvationist panaceas and social quackeries, promising everything to everybody, without the least regard to impossibilities, absurdities or contradictions. But even here Fascism is not original; even these odds and ends of social demagogy that form its program are drawn from the irrational, half-formed yearnings and fantasies of tormented middle-class groups driven to distraction by modern capitalism. In a certain sense, the very absurdity and irrationality of the program constitute its source of strength.

Fascism, as a number of keen observers have pointed out, offers a middle-class substitute-system for working-class socialism: national-racial solidarity for class solidarity, national struggle (war) for class struggle, the authoritarian-corporate state for the democratic-socialist state.

As essential to Fascism as its racial or national fanaticism is its authoritarianism, its shrill contempt for democracy, its sacred leadership-principle and Leader-cult. In this, too, we may see a mechanism of compensation for the insignificance and impotence of the petty bourgeoisie in present-day society, a mass abdication of responsibility, a self-abasement and a self-abandonment to an infallible, omnipotent, god-like Leader.

Taking Power – and After

Such is the Fascist mass movement as it drives to power. How it achieves power has been told in detail in many accounts of Italian and German Fascism. One thing is certain: it does not come to power through ‘violent revolution’. On the contrary, as Silone has well pointed out, the Fascist ‘revolution’ is a ‘revolution by arrangement’ in which power is taken over by the Fascist leaders through the connivance, through the direct assistance, of the powers-that-be in the old state, the bureaucrats, the generals, the industrialists, the financiers, the land-owners.

Once Fascism is in power, it passes through a series of fundamental transitions that strikingly alter its political physiognomy and social character. The original coalition government established on the day of Fascist triumph is transformed more or less quickly into a one-party totalitarian dictatorship. From an oppositional mass movement, Fascism develops into a military-bureaucratic governmental machine and ruling caste. These transitions are not accomplished peacefully by any means. Sharp and often bloody political struggles, drastic shifts of social composition, ruthless party purges and the

extermination of its own 'unreliable' mass organizations are some of the ways in which Fascism adapts itself to its new responsibilities as the wielder of absolute power in the totalitarian state, as the mandatory of the historical interests of national capitalism.

Such is the course of Fascism 'from below' – from its beginnings to its enthronement in power. The course of Fascism 'from above' is essentially different although the final goal may be the same.

Road of 'Fascism from Above'

Fascism 'from above' arises out of a situation of extreme social emergency – an economic, social and political breakdown, a war crisis, or the like. Only in this case no oppositional Fascist movement is given a chance to emerge. Strategically placed groups in the old state themselves take the initiative in moving towards an authoritarian regime that will be capable not only of 'controlling the situation' – that is, of keeping power in the hands of the old ruling classes – but also of fending off any outcroppings of Fascist demagoguery and Fascist plebeianism. Why cannot we accomplish the same results ourselves without having to call in these reckless, irresponsible Fascist adventurers to do it for us? – the men in power in the old state ask themselves.

Fascism 'from above' begins with a virtual *coup d'état* by these men in power in order to establish what we might call, by the French analogy, a decree-dictatorship. In case of war, it is a military dictatorship to win the war; in other cases, it is an 'emergency' regime to 'tide over the crisis'. However that may be, dictatorship has already obtained its foothold.

But a decree-dictatorship is not yet totalitarianism by a long shot. There now begins a process of converting the decree-dictatorship into a totalitarian state. An authoritarian military-police regime is established. Oppositional organizations are suppressed and political existence, not to speak of civil and political rights, is made the monopoly of the masters of the state. The old democratic institutions, where not formally abolished – and they need not be, are allowed to wither away in contemptuous disuse. In their place, a network of state-controlled organizations are created as instruments of propaganda, secret-police espionage and political control. Finally, through the cultivation of an appropriate ideology and system of social demagoguery, through stimulation and cultivation of the characteristically Fascist passions, themselves frequently engendered out of war hysteria, full-blown Fascism is achieved.

The line of development here sketched is necessarily oversimplified and schematic, for as yet we have no actual example of the installation of Fascist totalitarianism 'from above' from which to draw our materials. But it should

not therefore be concluded that it is all idle speculation. France and certain of the Balkan states have already taken more than a step or two along this road and the rest of the way is definitely foreshadowed, though by no means inevitable or inescapable in every one of its stages.

Fascism 'from above' is the logic of political development in a decaying capitalism. For capitalism today is no longer a self-acting and self-regulating mechanism; it can no longer work without constant governmental stimulation, without systematic economic regimentation, without increasing authoritarian control and 'coordination' of all social functions. Fascism 'from above' is a carefully planned effort to achieve such authoritarian control at the least cost to the dominant classes. It is an attempt of the powerful industrialists, bankers, generals and bureaucrats of the old regime to reap the 'blessings' of Fascism – the authoritarian state, the subjection of the masses – while avoiding the 'curse' – the painful necessity of handing over direct political power to an insurgent lower-class group. It is Fascism made safe for the powers-that-be.



Face of American Fascism

Nowadays there are not many left who insist 'it cannot happen here'. Nobody believes that America is immune from Fascism. But there is still little appreciation of how Fascism might come to America, along what road and slogans, driven by what circumstances and forces.

America is full of the raw materials of Fascism. It is full of the strange, obscure hates, fanaticisms and utopias that are the very life-blood of Fascism. It possesses historical traditions and deep-rooted prejudices that Fascism could well exploit for its own purposes. It contains in vast numbers those submerged, despairing and frustrated social groups that everywhere go to make up Fascism as a movement. It has already developed many of the authoritarian techniques and mechanisms that Fascism requires. Given the essential background of profound social crisis and a spark to set off the conflagration, and anything may happen.

What would be the physiognomy, the characteristic features, of a native American Fascism? In the sprouting Fascist sects in various parts of the country – above all, in the most significant Fascist movement ever to develop in the United States, Huey Long's 'Share-the-Wealth' movement – we see these

features outlined more or less clearly, more or less authentically. An insight into what a native American Fascism would be like should help us considerably in grasping the real character of the Fascist menace in this country.

Popular Oppositional Movement

Fascism in America would, of course, be the popular lower-class movement it is everywhere else. It would draw its strength from as wide a variety of social groups, and essentially from the same social levels, as the 'classical' Fascism of Europe: demoralised, desperate, unemployed; Southern 'poor whites', impoverished, distracted farmers and middle-class people in every part of the country; declassed professionals, embittered white-collar workers, students and youth denied a future; assorted 'hate' and crackpot-reform movements; vigilante, strike-breaking and terrorist outfits; nationalist, racialist and jingoist groups of all sorts.

The thoroughly plebeian, lower-class character of Fascism was plainly evident in Huey Long's 'Share-the-Wealth' movement, and no less obvious in the [Father Charles] Coughlin movement and in other Fascist and semi-Fascist outcroppings of today.

Fascism is an oppositional mass movement, distinct from and hostile to the traditional political parties. It is therefore fantastic to imagine either of the old-line political parties becoming a vehicle for Fascism in America. Of course, a local or state political machine may serve as a base of operations, as Louisiana did for Huey Long, but ultimately the movement would have to break through the traditional party system. It will be remembered that Huey Long himself was at the point of launching a third-party movement ('a party different from all other parties') when he was assassinated, and it should not be overlooked that 'anti-partyism' is one of the most persistent themes of the Coughlinite agitation.

Sectional Development of American Fascism

In one respect, American Fascism differs markedly from its European prototype. America is still a land of 'sections', of regions, that are politically, culturally and even, to some degree, economically distinct. American Fascism, too, develops along sectional lines. The Fascist groups that arise in the various parts of the land show striking differences in many essential features; no Southern Fascist movement, for example, could conceivably be Catholic; it would very probably be distinctly anti-Catholic. The logic of American development seems to make for the emergence of sectional Fascist movements, a struggle for survival and hegemony among them, and ultimately, should appropriate conditions appear, their fusion into one dominant organization.

Under the Banner of '100-percent Americanism'

Fascism needs its binding ideology, its 'philosophy', its faith. In the United States, this is the cult of '100-percent Americanism.' In such a cult are implied all the hates and fanaticisms with which this country abounds. It is the cult of the 'white Christian American', with its anti-foreignism ('America for Americans'), its anti-Negroism ('white supremacy'), and its anti-Semitism ('Kick the Jews out'); in some sections of the country, such as the South or the Middle-West, anti-Catholicism ('No Popery') would be added.

Ultra-nationalism, super-patriotism, jingoism of the most blatant sort are, of course, inherent in Fascist emotionalism and would nowhere be as violent or inflamed as in the United States. The heart of the political faith of Fascism is clearly Constitution-worship, the idolization of the Constitution as the sacred symbol, the icon of 'national existence'. And yet the authoritarianism and totalitarianism that are of the essence of Fascism are as repugnant to the conservative, 'checks-and-balance' spirit of the Constitution as anything could conceivably be. This contradiction lies close to the heart of American Fascism and is of great significance.

Huey Long is reported to have said that in this country no serious Fascist movement would for one moment think of imprinting that intensely unpopular term upon its banner; in America, he said, Fascism would advance under the cover of a great crusade to save the country from the threat of Fascism and dictatorship. Huey Long certainly knew what he was talking about. Every Fascist movement that has so far appeared in this country has presented itself as a crusade to uphold and protect the Constitution, to save the Constitution from those who would subvert it – the radicals, the 'reds', the labor unions, the Jews, the 'international bankers', the New Dealers. Nothing could be more indicative of the inherent irrationality of Fascism – an irrationality deliberately fostered and cultivated by the power-greedy demagogues who are its leaders – than the fantastic Constitution-worship of the American apostles of authoritarianism.

American Fascism is demonstratively 'Christian' and finds its most appropriate religious atmosphere in latter-day backwoods of fundamentalism. The 'Bible Belt' is a veritable hotbed of native American Fascism. Old Dr. [Willard] Townsend showed a somewhat unexampled insight into political realities when he spoke of a 'new movement' arising in America, composed of his own pension groups and 'all other dissatisfied persons excepting radicals, . . . people who believe in the Bible, cheer when the flag passes by – the Bible Belt solid Americans'. No more apt description of American Fascism could be given in so few words.

Re-examining Marxism



6. Marxism Probed in Fine Symposium⁴¹

New York City [1940]

The symposium on 'Reconsidering Marxism', held here under the auspices of the Independent Labor Institute on 26 April, was a tremendous success from every angle. It aroused wide enthusiasm among those who were present, crowding Rivera Hall to capacity, and it is still being talked about in socialist and radical circles in this city.

Lewis Corey led off the discussion with an exposition of the viewpoints developed by him in his recent articles in the *Nation* and in this paper [*Workers Age*]. He stressed the need, under present conditions of profound crisis in the socialist movement, of a thoroughgoing re-examination of the fundamental ideas of Marxism in a thoroughly critical spirit, free from dogmatic prejudice or conventional preconceptions. From this angle, he discussed the problems of democracy under socialism, of the role of the 'new' middle class in relation to socialism, of the class character of the socialist movement, and of the transition to the new social order. On all of these subjects and others, Corey maintained, the traditional views of Marxism needed modification and revision in the light of recent changes and new experiences. Marx, he said, was the greatest social philosopher of the nineteenth century, perhaps of any century, but naturally he could not foresee the future, nor was he by any means infallible.

Corey was followed by Bertram D. Wolfe, who gave a vivid and effective summary of the enduring elements of Marxism. While agreeing to a large extent with the burden of Corey's remarks, Wolfe made a series of criticisms of some of his positions, largely for their one-sidedness and misplaced emphasis.

After Wolfe came Herbert Zam of the *Socialist Review*, the official theoretical journal of the Socialist Party. Zam took vigorous issue with Corey's views, maintaining that they implied the abandonment of the irreducible essentials of Marxism. He was especially critical of Corey's stress on the 'new' middle class and its role in socialism both as a movement and a social order. Corey

41 *Workers Age*, 11 May 1940, pp. 1, 2.

was performing a service to socialism, Zam said, only in the sense in which [Eduard] Bernstein's revisionism performed a service – that is, by arousing the 'genuine' Marxists to a defense of Marxism.

The next speaker was Will Herberg, editor of *Workers Age*. He presented a paper in which the problems of socialism were considered in the light of the relations of means to ends. Whatever means or measures we make use of to achieve a goal, he maintained, possess a double potential: one making for the achievement of the desired end; the other, usually unforeseen, hampering and sometimes even frustrating its realization. From the point of view of this conception of ambivalence of means, he examined a number of problems raised by Corey and others, coming to the conclusion that both Corey and traditional Marxism tended to ignore the dilemmas of action arising out of this ambivalence.

Corey then took the floor to discuss the objections to his views raised by the preceding speakers. He was followed by Jay Lovestone, chairman of the meeting, who briefly but incisively commented on such problems as 'violence' in the transition and Marx's views on the middle class.

Then came a period of questions. For nearly half an hour, queries were shot from the audience at the speakers, who answered them in their closing remarks. The proceedings lasted over four hours and did not conclude until one o'clock in the morning; yet such was the intense interest of the audience that practically all present remained to a late hour, most of them until the very end.

Those who attended the symposium, representing virtually every section of the city's radical and socialist movement, were unanimous in their enthusiasm. Every one realized the great significance of the fact that such a discussion could be held at this time in so free, undogmatic and critical an atmosphere. There was high praise, too, for the serious thought, penetration and insight manifested in the addresses of the participants. All in all, the symposium undoubtedly represented an important landmark in the process of socialist self-criticism that is beginning to get under way.

7. Recreating Socialism⁴²

Lewis Corey

I take it for granted that we all agree that whatever movement we build toward a better America and toward a better world must be based upon American tradition, upon American experience, upon American problems. We have in this country the greatest opportunity for building a new America that will convey an inspiring message to all the peoples of the world. By and large, we are at the stage in American development where only a socialist reorganization of society will give us that better America, will give us the change to build upon the potentialities of American economic development and democratic experience because in this day of declining capitalism, in this day of threatening Fascism, only if we go beyond capitalism onto socialism can we really build a better America and preserve for the future and for a higher civilization all that is constructive in American life today.

But when I say that a better America should mean a socialist America, I am confronted by the inescapable fact that socialism today is in a state of collapse, that there is no faith in socialism by and large left in the world today. All variants of Marxist socialism are in collapse. The socialist movement is a mere tatter of things that were and might have been but are not, and the one experience of what a socialist organization of society may mean is represented by that monstrous totalitarian nightmare which is the Soviet Union.

In other words, we confront the problem of building a better America under compulsion to recognise that all the old ideas and all the old programs have failed to meet the pragmatic test of history, that socialism seems to have neither will nor power to do things in the modern world – or, where it is allegedly doing things, they are things that we do not want and that we repudiate.

⁴² *Workers Age*, 23 March 1940, p. 4; *Workers Age*, 31 March 1940, p. 3.

Need for Recreating Socialist Thought

Now, I submit that this puts before us a problem of the utmost importance. It places before us the problem of recreating socialism.

Communism was always an importation in the American scene. It was an artificial importation twenty years ago. It was an honest importation then. It is today, in the form of Stalinism, a much worse importation, because it has no honesty, because it trades upon the working class but is the worst enemy of the working class.

But socialism, too, the older socialism in America, was always an importation that had no real connection with the American scene. European Socialism, in the days of the Second International, was a movement that in practice attempted to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Europe. Strip European Socialism of its ideology, of its phraseology, of its Marxist trimmings, and we find that in practice that movement was essentially a democratic movement and that it set itself the primary task of democratizing Europe. We Marxists generally made the mistake and some still make it today, of arguing that the working class in Europe in taking to socialist parties was necessarily more advanced than the American working class which did not do so.

On the contrary, I think that today we must recognise the fact, and build upon the fact, that the American working class rejected the older types of European reformist socialism not because it was more backward but because it was ahead of the working classes of Europe. Organized socialism was essentially an expression of the democratic backwardness of Europe.

We already had, by and large, the democratic revolution in this country in the 1830s, and when there was imported a European socialism that was based upon the struggle for democracy in feudal Russia, semi-feudal Germany or bureaucratic France, that socialism had no meaning to America and to the American working class because we had already completed our bourgeois-democratic revolution. That socialism could not base itself upon the struggles which had already been victorious in this country, and it was too early in the last century to think seriously of the conquest of capitalism, because capitalism was still on the upgrade, still had tremendous powers of expansion, of making good on its promises to the people.

So I suggest, in all due humility, that the main thing that is necessary today to recreate and rebuild a movement towards a better America – which can only be a socialist America – is to recognise the fact that we need a new approach, a new program, a new language, with which to recreate our movement.

We have to unlearn a lot of things, to relearn a lot of things, to learn a lot of new things. This is a process which requires collective effort, collective thinking, collective experience.

Socialism and Democracy

There are a number of angles of the problem which I believe we ought to think about. The first one is the problem of socialism and democracy. In the world today, we have a trend everywhere, whether the government be bourgeois-democratic, or Nazi-fascist, or Bolshevik-Soviet – we have a trend towards totalitarian collectivism. That is the dominant trend in the world today, and it seems to make little difference what type of government you have – that trend towards totalitarian-collectivism goes on.

We must set up against that trend a trend toward democratic collectivism. Here I think we must recognise that the totalitarian collectivism is not simply a result of Russian experience and Russian tactics. That is a very important element in the problem. But when the Bolsheviks adopted the Marxist-Jacobin tactics of the seizure of power in a bourgeois-democratic revolution and proletarian dictatorship – only totalitarian dictatorship over the masses of the people could result.

I remember Lenin saying in 1920: 'We have a dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia without any proletariat!' And then they proceeded to build socialism without any proletariat, which is supposed to be the architect of the new socialist society.

Under those conditions, because of a peculiar 'fluke' of history, the task of building a new socialist society fell to a Party which could only resort to brutal totalitarian methods, when scarcely any of the elements of the new society were in existence with which to build it.

The general historical background of Russia was a factor, of course – the economic and democratic backwardness, the lack of a large proletariat. But I no longer believe those conditions alone were responsible for Bolshevik totalitarianism. I now think that proletarian dictatorship must destroy democracy and drive towards totalitarianism.

We assumed in the past that socialism and democracy were identical. We assumed that socialism meant the completion of the struggle for democracy. We took it for granted that once you socialised the means of production you made them common property, and that such an economic set-up could move only in the direction of socialism. But we see in Russia that the socialist system of collective ownership is identified with a new and more monstrous type of totalitarianism. Moreover, and this is still more significant, there is a tendency toward totalitarianism in the socialist system of collective ownership itself.

I think we must recognise today that there are elements in a socialist economy that, unless conscious measures are taken, unless the problem is recognised and something is done to solve it, may lead towards totalitarianism and not towards socialist democracy.

Very briefly, let me indicate what I mean. When you socialise the means of production and you amalgamate political and economic power in one center, you have an economic basis for totalitarianism. You create an overwhelming centralization of economic and political power, which may easily become the basis of a new tyranny; you destroy one of the basic elements of democracy in the modern world, the separation of economic and political power (against whose feudal combination the revolutionary bourgeoisie fought); you destroy the independent organizations in relation to the state (freedom of association), as is the case in Russia. Where are the conditions for democracy in that set-up?

State and Bureaucracy

We must recognise the fact that in the socialist set-up, there may arise an all-powerful state and its bureaucracy, and that unless neutralizing forces are advanced to ensure democracy, the emergence of a totalitarian state is inevitable.

There is also the question of the ambiguity of phrases we were fond of using and still continue using – ‘workers’ ownership’ and ‘workers’ state’. Now, I ask you in view of the Russian experience, precisely what do we mean by ‘workers’ ownership’ and ‘workers’ state’?

Under the socialist economic set-up, at least in its earlier stages, the worker is still a wage worker, and because there is centralization of all economic and all political power in the state, there is a condition where the workers may be deprived of all democratic and political rights. Consider that the moment you have socialist planning, you eliminate many conditions that have hitherto tended to safeguard democracy – for example, the free market, widely distributed ownership of the means of production, etc. When you destroy these automatic safeguards of democracy, however inadequate, as you do when you have a complete socialization of the means of production, you may get a movement towards totalitarianism, you may get the strongest totalitarianism that the world has ever seen – unless you recognise the problem and set up institutional arrangements to overcome that powerful tendency toward totalitarianism.

Very briefly, what are the institutional arrangements? First of all, there must be, under a socialist economic set-up, a democratic state. And by ‘democratic state’, I do not mean an abstraction, the so-called ‘workers’ state’, under which the ‘workers own’. Such meaningless abstractions today help to cloak the hideous reality of oppression of the workers in ‘socialist’ Russia. For the workers neither rule nor own. The effective power is wielded by a totalitarian bureaucracy which uses its unchecked political control over economic

power to become a new ruling class. I mean a state operating under the most democratic conditions, its greater economic powers checked and balanced by appropriate institutional arrangements, more responsive to democratic pressures and ideas.

Part of the trouble here stems from Marx himself. Marx said that socialism must destroy the capitalist state machinery, that the new socialist state must combine the executive, judicial and legislative branches of government into one central working body. I believe that has within itself the tendency towards totalitarianism. Marx's proposal is one of dictatorship, not democratic socialist government. It means an overwhelming centralization of economic and political power which inevitably moves toward an oligarchical despotism under conditions of the combination of powers.

[Socialist Checks and Balances]⁴³

The democratic state of a socialist society must be a state where there is a separation of powers, because we do not want too much power centralised in one group. We must have a system of socialist checks and balances directed against the state which has enormous power in its hands.

We must have a system of socialist parliamentarism. We cannot have a one-party system. We must have the legality of political opposition guaranteed within such a socialist set-up. For socialism, at least in its earlier stages, does not abolish all exploitation and conflicts of interest. Hence the freest democratic expression of conflicting interests and ideas is necessary.

On the economic side, we must have economic decentralization. We must have the maximum decentralization of powers if we want to transform that economic set-up into a socialist democracy. It is not necessary to collectivise all productive property. Since collectivism drives toward totalitarianism, we should limit collectivism as much as possible. Independent small property should be allowed in industry and agriculture with an admixture of cooperatives. Planning can be limited to control of the few strategic factors necessary to ensure an upward moving economic balance. Economic administrative boards in the nationalized large-scale economic sector should possess definite rights and powers independent of the central national authority, with representation of the workers and other functional interests.

We must have independence of unionism in such a socialist state, and the right of real collective bargaining by unions within it.

43 New subhead supplied by the editors of this volume.

I know it may be said that the workers form trade unions in order to fight against employers, the capitalists, but in a socialist state the capitalists are gone. How can the workers have collective bargaining against themselves?

This is sheer tragic nonsense, as we can see in Russia. Facing the workers is a state manipulated by a bureaucracy, and the workers must have the right of action against that state and bureaucracy – the right to ensure themselves of democracy in a concrete sense. Let me repeat: the workers are neither owners nor rulers. They still need independent organizations to protect their interests, especially under socialism where collective ownership is complete and the state is the only employer – otherwise totalitarianism results. Unlike socialism, the trade unions are a creation of the proletariat itself. To abandon the independence of trade unionism means to sell the workers into totalitarian slavery. Whoever argues the contrary is, in my opinion, an enemy of the workers who wants to use them to establish a totalitarian dictatorship over them. There can be no democratic socialism without independent trade unionism.

We must have a pluralism of powers in a socialist society – a functional democracy in which the powers of the state are constantly limited through the largest measure of functional democratic independence of economic and cultural groups.

These are some suggestions thrown out on this problem. I think it is a problem that must be seriously pondered. We cannot take it for granted that socialism equals democracy. We can get democracy under a socialist economic set-up only if we will democracy and fight for democracy by setting up the necessary institutions to achieve it.

The Road to Power

Another point is the question of the road to power. I want to suggest here, too, all variants of socialism have shown serious shortcomings in facing the problem.

The old social-democratic idea of 'growing into' socialism has been proven and found wanting by the pragmatic test of history. The newer communist idea of revolution by violence and the dictatorship of the proletariat have given us the monstrous totalitarianism which is the Soviet Union today.

I suggest that both approaches, or interpretations, of the road to power or transition to socialism have shown serious shortcomings. A violent revolution could have been successful in Russia where there was a backward peasantry still under feudal conditions and no large new middle class, but in a highly developed capitalist country like the United States, where there is an articulate

class of farmers and a strong new middle class, resorting to violence would mean that those classes had not been won over to socialism, and if there were a resort to violence, those classes could dispose of much more violence than the workers, so that the revolution would be crushed in blood. Even if successful, violence would mean a birth of socialism under conditions that would leave the new order scarred for years to come, because a revolution made against the opposition of the farmers and the new middle class would have to resort to dictatorship, and that would not be given up in a hurry. Moreover, that would defeat the ends of democratic socialism. It would mean a totalitarian bureaucracy ruling over the people. And who would be that new ruling class? Not the workers – they would still remain workers – but the new middle class of bureaucrats in industry and government, technicians, managers, the functionaries of dependent trade unions, professionals and intellectuals – as in Russia today.

I suggest that we ought to consider the question under American conditions of a new type of gradualism working towards socialism. I know it may be said: 'But they tried gradualism in Europe and see the results'. Social Democracy talked about gradualism. It was not gradualism that failed in Germany. The trouble was not that Social Democracy had a program of gradualism but that it had no program of socialism whatsoever. It made no effort to introduce socialism, gradually or otherwise, wherever it had government power.

Social Democracy, especially in Germany, ended in being simply the political expression of 'radical' trade unionism, trying to get more for the workers under capitalism. Since capitalism was in decline, it could not continue doing so indefinitely and the whole of Germany moved towards Fascism.

We must work out a gradualist program of socialist reconstruction, a program capable of indicating to the American people precisely what we understand by socialism, a program that will express the interests of all useful groups in society. Not only workers, but the farmers and the middle classes as well.

Such a program must offer fundamental readjustments capable of solving the economic crisis. The program should include nationalization of investment and credit, the nationalization of large-scale industry, and planning. It should include recognition and encouragement of independent small property, with special measures to solve their particular problems in the new set-up. Nationalization and planning must involve encouragement of unions, cooperatives and other self-governing organizations of functional groups, and place in their hands as much power as possible. Such a program, if introduced in a decisive manner and not spread out over too long a period of time, would solve the economic crisis and, since it makes a fundamental break between the old and the new, could set in motion the transition from capitalism to socialism.

For a People's Socialism

We must get away from the conception of socialism as being simply in the interests of the workers. That marks it down simply as trade unionism. We need a people's socialism, a socialism that will appeal to all the people, to all useful groups in society. All those useful groups are needed under socialism. Socialism must be capable of rallying all these masses of the people, capable of making them see that their interests are expressed in this socialist society. To do that, it is necessary to abandon the old emphasis on the proletariat as the 'carrier' of socialism. The concept is unhistorical and unrealistic. Emphasis on the proletariat leads either to disastrous totalitarian dictatorship or to the futility of Social Democracy. Trade unionism should emphasise the proletariat. But socialism must broaden and deepen itself to become the expression of the interests and action of all useful functional groups in society.

This is not a popular front program. It is a program of decisive socialist action. The popular front program was a program of compromise. But the people's socialism I am advocating is one that will work out a program of socialism expressing the interests of all useful groups in society, and in doing this, build upon our own experience and our own traditions and our own needs and thus set in motion a struggle that will not only give us a better America but a democratic socialist America as well.

8. Basic Dilemma of Socialism⁴⁴

Will Herberg

Let me say at the very outset that I regard Lewis Corey's recent articles on Marxism as a first-rate contribution to the enterprise in which we, in common with all other more alert sections of the radical movement, have been engaged for some time – the re-examination and revaluation of the fundamental principles of socialism. I agree with very much of what he says, particularly with his emphasis on freedom and democracy as integral to socialism and his warning of the totalitarian potential in economic collectivism. Of course, I also disagree on a number of points, some secondary and merely technical – such as questions of terminological propriety or historical interpretation, especially in attributing views to Marx – and others of considerably greater importance, touching perhaps on crucial issues. But whether I agree or disagree, I am thoroughly convinced that it is precisely by raising such searching questions going to the very root of our conceptions, that we will be able to make any progress in recreating a theoretical foundation for a reconstructed and revitalised socialism. More power to such inquiries!

I do not intend here to make a point-by-point examination of the views advanced by Corey in his articles in order to pass judgment on them. What I want to do is to utilise this occasion to present some ideas on socialist theory that have gradually been forming in my mind in recent years and that I think are distinctly relevant to the problems raised in the Corey articles. This approach, it seems to me, will make possible a more fruitful and many-sided discussion.

44 *Workers Age*, 8 June 1940, p. 4; *Workers Age*, 15 June 1940, p. 4; *Workers Age*, 22 June 1940, p. 3.

Grave Defect in Traditional Socialism

There is no doubt in my mind that traditional-socialist theory – socialist theory as developed by Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin; yes, and Kautsky too – is gravely defective in at least one very decisive respect. There is nothing in this body of doctrine, aside from a few stray suggestions of Marx and some very brilliant insights of Rosa Luxemburg, to enable us – I do not say to forecast – but even adequately to understand and explain the catastrophe of the Russian Revolution. The problem is no easy one to grasp; it is the historical paradox that, whereas Lenin started (as a study of his own works or of [Boris] Souvarine's book on Stalin will show) with a philosophy that was ultra-democratic, almost libertarian in character, the Bolshevik regime took the road of totalitarian dictatorship. The very conception of a collectivist totalitarianism is essentially foreign to traditional-Marxist thought, with the brilliant exception, as I have already mentioned, of Rosa Luxemburg. I know it will be said that the founding fathers of socialism could not possibly have foreseen the very extraordinary conditions under which the Russian Revolution took place. This is true – but true only in part. In the first place, it does not apply to Lenin, who was there in person. But even more to the point – traditional Marxism does not supply us, at least not adequately, with the instrumental concepts and categories to enable us really to understand the way these extraordinary conditions affected the fate of the Russian Revolution. To be able to understand the effects of specific historical conditions, even the most exceptional and extraordinary, presupposes a clear and all-sided grasp of the fundamental historical processes in their generalised or typical form, and this we have certainly not received from our masters of doctrine.

In saying this, I by no means wish to level any reproaches against Marx, Engels or Luxemburg – although here, perhaps, Lenin stands a little more exposed to criticism. They never claimed that their ideas or teachings constituted a body of revealed and eternal truth, the very last word in wisdom, and they would not have tolerated any such claim made by others on their behalf. As Corey points out, their ideas and teachings, like those of any of us mere mortals, were historically conditioned and limited; indeed, it is one of Marx's great services to have pointed out the general law of such historical conditioning. A great deal of water has flowed under the bridge in the last twenty-five years – we still, perhaps, do not fully appreciate how much; and we ought today to be in a position to see and understand things that the giant thinkers of the past could not have foreseen with all their power and genius.

It is, therefore, in the spirit not of abandoning Marxism as worthless and discredited, which it most emphatically is not, but in the spirit of correcting

and completing it – yes, and revising it – in the light of our experience, that I make these remarks and throw out these suggestions.

Contradictory Relation of Means and Ends

The main idea I want to present at the present time is this: the great defect of traditional Marxism is its failure to comprehend and lay bare the contradictory, complicated relation between the socialist goal, on the one hand, and the measures, means and mechanisms required for its achievement, on the other. Nay more; traditional Marxism hardly sees any problem at all here, much less a problem of any seriousness or difficulty. Yet I believe the problem is there – and it is crucial.

Let me formulate the problem in general terms first. What is the fundamental goal of socialism? The only adequate answer, in my opinion, is freedom. Everything else that socialism strives for – collectivism, economic security and the like – it strives for only because they help to make freedom possible under modern conditions. Otherwise, a sort of super-slave state, in which everyone is well-fed, well-housed and well-clad through the ministrations of some benevolent despot, would be the ideal of socialism – a monstrous thought! In speaking of effective freedom as the great ideal of socialism, I am not trying to be original by any means. It is the ideal clearly conceived by virtually all great socialist thinkers in the past, Marx above all. It was Marx who, in the preamble of the French socialist program of 1880, which he dictated, wrote:

The worker is free only when he is the owner of his own instruments of labor. This ownership can assume either the individual or the collective form. Since individual ownership is being abolished day by day through economic development, there remains only the form of collective ownership.⁴⁵

It was Marx who saw the goal of social development, realized by socialism, as ‘an association in which the free development of each will lead to the free development of all’.

This much is clear. But here arises the crucial problem, the crucial difficulty. For the measures, agencies and instrumentalities which we devise or make use of in order to realize the socialist goal do not by any means provide us with a

45 *Editors' note:* for a slightly different translation, see Marx 1975–2004e, p. 340.

smooth, uniform, straight-line path to that goal. On the contrary, they inescapably give rise to situations and release forces that run directly counter to the goal and even threaten to vitiate or destroy it. I say inescapably, because it is not owing to accidental factors or disturbing conditions that this is so, but intrinsically, owing to the very nature of the case.

If I were to use a very much abused terminology, I would say that the relation of means to ends here is dialectical – not merely in the very important sense that they react and interact upon each other, but in the still more important sense that any means put into operation in order to realize the socialist goal give rise to two sets of consequences, organically related though essentially antagonistic: on the one hand, the consequences desired and intended in order to achieve the goal, on the other hand, consequences entirely undesired and undesirable, usually unforeseen, sometimes even hamper the realization of the goal, sometimes even threatening its destruction. And, I may add, it is because this second set of consequences is usually so unforeseen, unexpected, and unprovided against that it is so dangerous.

To use another terminology, we may say that the means necessary to affect the end possesses not simply a single, positive potential, but a double, two-valued potential, both positive and negative. It is not merely that some means are good and others bad; that is obvious. It is that all means, even the best under the circumstances, possess this ambivalent character – their ‘goodness’ as a means being largely dependent on the proportion of their two potentials. Specific ‘objective’ or historical conditions exert their influence in this connection through endowing these potentials with specific weights.

Let me give you an example, a most basic example. In order to make real freedom possible under modern conditions, some sort of economic collectivism is absolutely indispensable. But economic collectivism of any sort, however limited and safeguarded, possesses, as Corey has so well shown, not simply a positive libertarian potential but also a negative totalitarian potential. In other words, economic collectivism inevitably releases two sets of forces, those making for freedom on the basis of socialism, and those making for totalitarian slavery on the basis of a caricature of ‘socialism’ that we had better call ‘statism’. And yet, economic collectivism is necessary for freedom under modern conditions. There lies the crux of the problem, the fundamental dilemma.

The great defect of traditional-socialist theory is its failure to grasp this dialectical, this two-valued character of the means, political and economic, necessary to realize the socialist goal. It cannot therefore adequately grasp the danger inherent in this intrinsically contradictory situation, and take measures, if such are possible, to meet it. Worse, it often tends to ignore, minimise,

or conjure away this danger with empty formulas. No one is more guilty of this dogmatical blindness than Leon Trotsky.

Marx often, almost always, argues as if once appropriate means have been set in motion to achieve a goal, that is the end of it. If properly applied, with energy, determination and understanding, under not unfavorable external conditions, the goal will be reached and no untoward 'by-products' need be feared, except incidentally and accidentally. This is obvious in his doctrine of revolutionary dictatorship as the transition regime. And yet these untoward 'by-products' are frequently as intrinsic and as important and far-reaching in their consequences, as the main products themselves, that is, those that are desired and intended.

The chief shortcoming of the viewpoint developed by Corey in his articles, it seems to me, is a sort of inverse tendency, a tendency to reject the means *in toto*, or almost *in toto*, out of aversion, and quite justified aversion, to their negative consequences. But frequently the means, for all their negative consequences, cannot be rejected if you really want to achieve the end. To do so is simply to deceive yourself, to imagine that you have solved the problem when you have merely suppressed one of its terms, one of its aspects.

Force and Socialist Revolution

Let me illustrate this by means of another example taken over from Corey's articles. Traditional Marxism believes, with Marx, that in some form or manner, 'force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with the new', and because some degree of 'force' is regarded as generally inescapable to political transitions of this sort, traditional Marxism accepts it without allowing itself to be too much disturbed about unwelcome and unlooked for consequences. But Corey is very much disturbed. He shows quite convincingly that a transition marked by violence, a 'catastrophic' transition, as he calls it, would not only increase economic chaos but would give a powerful impetus to the forces making for dictatorship and totalitarianism and thus open the way to disaster.

But having shown this, what does Corey do? He suppresses the difficulty simply by ignoring it. A proper attitude to the middle classes, a proper conception of socialism as a people's socialism of all functional groups – he convinces himself – will enable us to escape the 'pincers of totalitarianism', because it will rally the vast majority of the population on the side of the new social order. But to argue thus is to show an amazingly naïve attitude to history. However overwhelming the popular support for the new regime may be, is it at all probable

that the old vested interests of property and power, still having vast resources at their command, will take their threatened expropriation and extinction lying down, without a struggle? In another place, Corey himself writes: 'such a program of transitional reconstruction limits the number of interests of all useful functional groups, and so creates a popular movement that may beat down the reactionary opposition'. 'Beat down' seems to imply some form or degree of violence, and yet Corey's whole point is that his program of transition enables society to escape it.

There is a real dilemma in all this, as I have already suggested: violence in the transition is well-nigh inevitable, especially under present-day world conditions; yet, violence in this sense – that is, civil war on a larger or smaller scale – necessarily implies an 'emergency-' regime, a dictatorial regime, commanding a certain degree of arbitrary force applied ruthlessly. And we know to what that may lead. But this dilemma is a real one and it cannot be solved simply by ignoring one of its aspects, as I think Corey tends too much to do.

Or take the problem of the class character of socialism. Traditional Marxism lays great stress on socialism as a working-class movement not only because it sees socialism as emerging from the basic needs and circumstances of the proletariat in modern society, but also because it desires to implement the socialist ideal by embodying it in a powerful and strategically placed social force to serve as its bearer. In short, not only does the proletariat need socialism but even more so does socialism need the proletariat.

This effort to give practical force to the socialist idea; by making the working-class movement its bearer and vehicle, is a striking expression of that clear-headed social realism of which traditional Marxism has every reason to be proud. But thus stressing the proletarian character of socialism has its negative consequences, as Corey has shown. It may alienate the middle classes, isolate the socialist proletariat. What, then, does Corey do? Again he tends to suppress one side of the dilemma simply by ignoring it. Let us free socialism from its one-sided proletarian prepossession, he says. Let us make it equally the affair of the middle classes and all useful functional groups in society. Very good: but then is not socialism again left without a firm social base or driving force? Let me ask this question: who is to bring together, to unite, to consolidate all the functional groups of society for socialism? Not labor, as traditional Marxism, with its strategy of class alliances, would have it; for labor is simply one of the functional groups. Who else, if not some sort of super-class group of socialist intellectuals – and professional revolutionaries, God forbid! – in actual fact, a super-class group of socialist intellectuals? Are we not back, then, with some modifications, it is true, to the traditional Bolshevik organizational scheme, with all its consequences?

Here, again, the dilemma is a real one, rooted in the nature of the case, and it cannot be solved by turning your head away and refusing to see one of its elements.

Traditional Marxism is power-conscious; it is a doctrine of *Realpolitik*. It places great stress on the politics of power in the furtherance and realization of socialist goals. Marx accepts the instrumentality of power single-mindedly and without any foreboding. We have learned, all to our sorrow, that power is at best a most dangerous instrumentality, that it has a double potential, that it has a kick-back that may prove most disastrous. Corey is acutely, and very properly, conscious of this negative side, of this dangerous, often self-defeating aspect of the politics of power. And so he ignores politics and power almost completely. Read through his account of the transition from capitalism to socialism. It includes an excellent transition program of economic transformation. But how about politics and power relations? Will not the transition program require political power to implement it? Where does such political power come from? From what classes or groups, and how exerted? How about the political struggles that are bound to break in and affect the course of the economic transition? Not a hint, not a suggestion of an answer in Corey's articles.

Traditional Marxism, particularly in its Leninist variety, is a frank and somewhat naïve votary of *Realpolitik*. It strives to cut all Gordian knots with the sword of power, and it is confident it can do so, realizing all too little how double-edged is this sword, how easily it may maim and destroy its own wielder. Corey is very much aware of this danger, and this is one of his strong points, but he seeks an escape in simply ignoring power and politics – hardly a very realistic course to take.

Again, the dilemma is a real one, inherent in the facts themselves. It cannot be overcome simply by ignoring it.

It is my essential thesis that these dilemmas – real dilemmas, rooted in the very nature of the situation – confront us at every turn, at every level of socialist action, whenever we make use of means to realize ends. Perhaps it is an aspect of the contradictory, the dialectic character of social reality. At any rate, the dilemmas are there.

Organization and Bureaucracy

Let me show you how deep this self-contradiction penetrates. The first step in the realization of any social goal, on any view of the matter, whether Corey's or that of traditional Marxism, is organization. But even organization has its double potential. Without organization, obviously nothing can

be accomplished. But the very act of organization sets in motion processes that threaten the goal, if the goal is the socialist goal of freedom. For organization, even the most democratic, necessarily creates two categories, the leaders and the led, who are not and cannot in the nature of the case be entirely interchangeable. We have here the first dim foreshadowing – a sort of prefigurement, so to speak – of authoritarian hierarchy, which may reach its culmination in the totalitarian leadership system of Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, or in the initiative-killing, paralysing system of drill-yard discipline that characterised German Social Democracy and contributed to its downfall.

Rosa Luxemburg well understood this problem and this difficulty, as she understood so many others that her quick genius was able to penetrate. That is very clear from her profound discussion of 'spontaneity' in organization and her impassioned opposition to regimentation.

Let me place this problem a little more concretely. The super-centralised, authoritarian form of Bolshevik Party organization was moulded by the conditions of revolutionary struggle under Tsarism. It was an eminently realistic and effective form under those conditions. It was a form of organization that made it possible for the Bolshevik Party to carry through a successful revolution in Russia, and I very much doubt if any widely different form of organization would have done as much. But with the revolution accomplished, this very form of organization became a very grave hindrance to the realization of the goal for which the revolution had presumably been made – socialism and freedom. For this super-centralised, authoritarian, undemocratic organizational form was undoubtedly an important factor making for the emergence of Soviet totalitarianism, first under Lenin and Trotsky, and then in its most monstrous shape, under Stalin.

Here, then, is the dilemma: the very form of organization that facilitated – nay, was indispensable for revolution, turned out to be the form of organization that helped turn the fruits of the revolution into ashes, that led to Stalinism and totalitarianism.

But this happened in Russia, you will say, under the most exceptional conditions – requiring a revolutionary organization to take the form of a super-centralised, authoritarian, conspiratorial, semi-military organization of an elite, instead of an open and democratic mass movement – these exceptional conditions, I say, are now being repeated on an increasing scale wherever Fascism holds sway. What will that mean for the socialist movement developed under those conditions? There is much matter for serious thought here.

I think I have shown how fundamental and all-pervasive is this dilemma-situation to which I have referred so frequently. Again I repeat: it is irreducible; it is inherent in the situation, in the very nature of things.

How Can the Dilemma be Resolved?

If you ask me how this dilemma, or these dilemmas, taken singly or collectively, may be avoided or overcome, I will tell you that I do not know. Furthermore, I do not think that any answer in such general form is possible. No practical dilemma, it seems to me, can find a solution in a general, abstract, theoretical form – but only in a specific, concrete, practical form, through an experimental process of adjustment and improvement. Here the deed, which we learn was the beginning of all things, will have to have the last word as well.

Institutional restraints and safeguards are absolutely necessary, of course; in fact, they are quite indispensable, and Corey very properly lays great stress upon them. But such safeguards, particularly in the generalised form in which alone it is possible to plan them in advance, are by no means sufficient. Supplementing and implementing them is needed a strong, unflagging will-to-freedom permeating every functional group and every section of the population, and manifesting itself in eternal vigilance and an ever-ready determination to act. Such a collective spirit might be relied upon, I believe, to exert itself effectively in each specific emergency to the degree permitted by the concrete circumstances, thus giving life and efficacy to democratic institutions. But this will-to-freedom, if it is to be anything more than a phrase, must be illuminated by a consciousness of the issues at stake, by a sober and realistic understanding of the varying potentialities of the situation and the instrumentalities at hand. Wishful thinking of whatever sort is bound to prove fatal.

And this brings me to the end of my remarks. But I want to stress again, before I conclude, how valuable I regard the viewpoints developed by Corey in his articles to be, even where I differ with or criticise them to a degree. Especially do I value his readiness to question all things, to examine them fundamentally, without fear, favor or dogmatical prejudice. Never, I think, than in the present difficult situation in which the socialist movement finds itself, was that ancient Biblical injunction more fitting and proper which bids us: 'Prove all things and hold fast that which is good!'

9. The Basic Core of Marxism⁴⁶

Bertram D. Wolfe

There are fashions in social thought, as in other things. Today it is open hunting season against Marxism in the same camp that only yesterday was swallowing Marx neat without so much as a chaser.

I think we cannot talk about the failure or success of Marxism. I think it is sounder to talk of the usefulness and validity – or lack of them – in Marxism, as an instrument for dealing with the problems of our time. To decide whether it can be regarded as a useful instrument, I think it is desirable to give a brief description of Marxism in summary form.

It is a nineteenth-century sociological synthesis – probably the greatest theoretical synthesis made during the nineteenth century. It represents on the whole for sociology something similar to what Darwinism represents for biology. Both of them to be effective and useful today must be constantly revised, constantly enriched, constantly used and constantly supplemented in the light of that use and enrichment.

If one compares Marx with the other great sociological figures of the nineteenth century, the Spencers, the Comtes, the Mills and the like, one sees these other figures receding like the landscape from the rear platform of a train, but one sees Marxism still with us as a banner and even a household word. This at least indicates that Marxism has a certain relevance to our outlook and the needs of our time.

Roughly, Marxism consists of five things: a world view or *Weltanschauung*; a theory of history; an analysis of capitalist society; a guide to politics or social action; and a forecast, vague and tentative, of a coming social order.

46 *Workers Age*, 29 June 1940, p. 4; *Workers Age*, 6 July 1940, p. 3.

Marxism as a World View

As a world view, it is generally summed up in the two words – ‘dialectical materialism’. Here the cruellest of parodies and abuses have taken place. It has been made a stake at which to burn, a shibboleth to which to cling, a sophistic by which to justify every twist and turn, every act and misdeed, a straightjacket for science and for art, and an esoteric mystery. But it remains true that dialectical materialism is a synthesis of the great streams of classical philosophy of the preceding centuries. It is not just a collection of ‘thoughts’ or dogmas. It is an instrument for thinking, and as such, needs use, refinement and constant correction.

As a mode of thought, it lays emphasis upon change. It reminds us that in every structure there are processes, that stability is relative, that conditions are historical in their origins, in their course and in their outcome. It warns against too simple thinking, too static, too much in isolation.

That is not to deny the value of considering things statically and in isolation, but to remind us that there are certain points where that kind of thinking breaks down. It reminds us also that change is not merely gradual, but at certain points also sweeping, fundamental, transforming change.

I maintain that conceptions such as these are hints for clearer thinking, and whoever wilfully rejects them impoverishes his own thought, and in an epoch so rife with change as the present, hinders himself from grasping some of our central problems. As a mode of thought, Marxism does not have all the answers. It does enlarge the range of questions and the outlook for answering them.

As a Theory of History and Society

As a theory of history, Marxism has literally transformed historiography. It has brought the masses onto the scene of history, introduced modes of production, economic conditions, developmental approaches and other considerations, bringing history closer to science. I quote here from the article on ‘History’ in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, which cannot be charged with excessive partiality: ‘it is an exaggeration of the theory which makes it an explanation of all human life, but the whole science of dynamic sociology rests on Marx’.

As an analysis of capitalist society, it could not and did not foresee in detail twentieth-century capitalism. Still less could it foresee the nature and structure of a future socialist society. But it did represent a first approach to capitalist society as something historically evolved, historically conditioned and historically limited. As such it is still effective.

It did consider and work out better than any other theory a law of development of capitalist society. It did contribute the only theory of crises which will stand the test of twentieth-century crises, and it did foresee in long range the fact that free competition would give way to, or would beget, its opposite, monopoly, in the course of its natural development. These things are in the main borne out and not refuted by subsequent developments. Moreover, they give the basis for consideration of the major problem of the present era, the problem of the development of capitalism from free competition to monopoly-imperialist capitalism.

New Problems of Our Day

That raises a series of new problems to which Marx did not have the answers, nor should the answers be sought in his writings: the problem of the socialization of production; the problem of the fusion of the state and industry; the problem of the nature and course of socialist ownership; the problem of democratic control and distribution; the problem of the fate of small-scale industry in a general large-scale system; the problem of preserving freedom, innovation, heterogeneity, in the midst of growing uniformity, growing standardization.

I say Marx had no ready-made answers to any of these questions. His merit was to foresee and raise some of them, and to suggest a direction in which we might possibly look for an answer. It is our contemporary task to look for answers and to find them.

I have touched upon three of the main constituents of Marxism. The fourth is a consideration of Marxism as a guide to social action. Here I join issue somewhat with Corey.

Marxism, as it was a scientific theory, had necessarily to 'change its face', as Engels said, with each new discovery, to change, to enrich, to correct its generalizations about social action, especially with each dramatic experience of social change and revolution.

If we examine the lessons from the post-war period, I do not see Corey's generalization issuing from them.

The German Revolution – if we ask why it failed – and there was a German Revolution – we have to find the answer in the failure to use political power for economic transformation; in the employment of gradualism in a time requiring revolutionary change; and in the failure to use power in the form of a revolutionary dictatorship, the failure to dismantle the old military machine, the old economic basis of the old German life. These are the roots of the course that went from Ebert to Hindenberg to Hitler. Austria teaches us no other lesson. And Spain, the last to offer itself, teaches no other lesson.

If we want to continue to use Marxism scientifically, as the living Marx did and as living Marxists must, then we must derive our lessons from these latter-day revolutions – positive and negative lessons.

Now some lessons from Russia. Here I tend to see pretty closely eye-to-eye with Corey. Lincoln Steffens came back from Russia and said: 'I have seen the future and it works'. Disillusioned radicals who are falling out of love with Russia today say: 'I have seen the future, and it does not work'. I say in both cases love was blind, and the hatred and disillusion which follow are blind also.

No, we have not seen the future in Russia. What we have seen is a backward land undertaking very late in history the smashing of a feudal, autocratic system; doing it with a cowardly and impotent bourgeoisie, with a very small and weak proletariat and an overwhelming peasant mass; making a strange and inevitably mixed revolution in a backward land lacking sufficient industry, lacking democratic conditions and institutions, bourgeois or proletarian, lacking democratic habits and traditions, a land of personal totalitarian dictatorship long before Stalin was ever born. Such was Russia: a land of general submergence of personality, a land where only one personality made itself felt by ukase and the rest were subject to prescription and that untranslatable Russian word '*nevol'ya*', absence of will; a land of torture, hostages and the knout throughout its history. In such a land came an overdue bourgeois revolution, with a bourgeoisie too cowardly to make it, a peasant *jacquerie* led by a small concentrated proletariat lacking in culture and preparation, in the midst of war, invasion, breakdown, chaos.

Inevitably, this coursed all the things in the name of which it professed to operate. It debased the level of Russian life and the Russian masses. Having been under its hypnotic spell, Corey is today awakening and discovering certain commonplaces of Western Socialism, a socialism which never dreamed of saying 'workers' without saying 'workers of hand and brain', which never dreamed of speaking of collective ownership without adding democratic control, and which pointed with the finger of scorn at those reformists who thought that state-capitalism was identical with socialism.

There are significant lessons, positive and negative, to be drawn from the Russian Revolution. I can give a few of them only briefly, in summary form:

1. That the bourgeois revolution can be realized today, even in such a land, only by the more democratic process of being carried out by the action of the masses.
2. That the masses, aroused even for brief periods, are capable of accomplishing miracles of heroism and achievement.
3. That even industrialization and reconstruction of ruin is helped by planning and by mass initiative.

4. That the road out of war is through fraternization and international solidarity.

Some negative lessons from Russia – certainly here Corey and I, I believe, are in agreement:

1. That socialism is inseparable from democracy.
2. That nationalization or stratification involves new dangers to the economy, to thought, to freedom.
3. That a breach between culture and the masses, between the intelligentsia and the specialists, on the hand, and the manual workers and peasants on the other, is harmful to both of them and to society.
4. That we cannot make a backward land a model, nor make virtues of its very deficiencies without harm to the international movement.
5. That planning, that industrialization, that socialism, cannot be introduced by despotic methods.
6. That one-party dictatorship, that monolithic dictatorship of the apparatus, that personal dictatorship, inevitably fetter production, destroy initiative and make impossible the building of a new socialist society.

Need Shift in Emphasis

To close these brief remarks, I want to make a shift in emphasis in what we are to derive, and what we want to outgrow or reject, of Marxism. In that I also agree with Corey. A wrong emphasis has been made. There are certain things in Marx's personality that were easy to imitate and which have been imitated – how to spit, how to sneer, hiss abuse and invective, his impatience with differences and disagreements. These are all characteristics of Marx the man, and the man, like other men – including all of us – was human. However, these were not the strengths of Marxism. These were some of its weaknesses.

Moreover, Marx engendered his mode of approach in conflict with Utopian socialism, with sentimental and philistine brands and varieties of socialism, and so he emphasised a certain hard-boiled, realistic, scientific attitude as against theirs.

But today, living as we do in the midst of a general brutalization of mankind, it is time that we outgrew this outlived polemical slant and emphasised the essential humanism which is at the core of the essential Marxian outlook on life – the strong side and the more fundamental: the core of that economic analysis which at heart is an exposure of the exploitation of man by man, and exposure of the slavery of man to things, an exposure of the fetishism of commodities, the fetishism of money, the fetishism of production for production's

sake, of machinery for machinery's sake, of profit, of the scarcity of things, of the subjection of man to his products. The Marx that thought, that analysed those things, has much to contribute in the brutalised world of today, here in America just as much as in Russia. For the essence of Marxism lies in this humanism. It exalts the role of planning and consciousness. It exalts the sense of historicity and change. It represents a critical experimental, scientific temper in sociology; a respect for the great mass of mankind, a respect for democracy which includes the determination to extend it from mere formal, political democracy to economic and social democracy; and an underlying humanism which aims to make man's mastery of nature, man's welfare, man's mastery of his own nature, the conscious goal of man's effort. In this sense, Marxism has much to contribute to our century and to our efforts to cut our way out of the social jungle and find the path to a better society.

Fadeout

Editors' note: The fadeout of the Lovestone group began in 1938 and culminated with its formal dissolution at its final Convention on 28 and 29 December 1940.

In March 1938, in his address to the group, a portion of which is reproduced here as 'Marxists and the Unions', Lovestone repeated anti-sectarian and anti-Stalinist themes that had been advanced many times before. But he also called for an orientation of concentrating all attention and energies into the existing trade-union movement. The existence of organisations, campaigns, and social movements outside of the unions would, he argued, 'hurt the movement and waste its energies. Take the trade-union movement today. Why should we not fight for workers' rights, the right to organise, unemployment relief and the like through the existing trade unions?' He argued that 'most "conferences" and "periphery" organisations... do not stimulate the activity of the unions but devitalise and replace them'. He concluded that 'if we have succeeded in anything, it is in working out a sound trade-union theory and in developing sound relations between the class-conscious radicals in the unions and the movement as a whole'. He added that 'there are still many ideas and practices that we should examine critically and discard if necessary' – ideas and practices that would make organised socialists anything other than 'an integral part' of the actually-existing labour movement.

This theme was elaborated three months later in Will Herberg's 'Convention of a new beginning', an article helping to prepare the Lovestone group's National Convention to formally and fully sever all ties to the Communist movement, and to create the group's final incarnation – the Independent Labor League of America (ILLA). One of the remarkable features of Herberg's article is not only the dismissal of all other left-wing groups in the United States, but his complete dismissal of the entire history of US radicalism as being inherently sectarian and 'dualist' (that is, existing outside of the trade-union movement). 'Our aim is not to remake the labor movement in our own image, in accordance with our own pet recipes, but to bring ourselves in line with the fundamental strivings, with the inner tendencies of the labor movement as it is and as it is becoming.... We want to make our group the political concentration of the most militant and advanced elements in every trade union, in every labor organisation, on every field of the labor struggle'.

Such things can be interpreted in more than one way – but it is not clear, either from Lovestone's remarks or from Herberg's article, how the struggle

against racism in the United States, the struggle against women's oppression, the struggle against imperialism and war, the struggle for civil liberties, etc. would be advanced through such an orientation, aside from unions passing resolutions on these issues. Nor is it clear, if existing unions and union leaders have an orientation of 'pure-and-simple' trade unionism that opposes unions spending energy and resources on such 'outside' issues, and if they openly and explicitly embrace the capitalist system (as such AFL officials as George Meany would do, and even David Dubinsky would soon do), how socialists would advance different policies without violating the new supposedly anti-sectarian precepts enunciated by Lovestone and Herberg. Neither was there a clear pathway to activism for the majority of workers and others (including some in and around the Lovestone group) who were not members of unions.

This new orientation dovetailed with the far-reaching political and theoretical examination indicated in items presented earlier in this volume – including the symposium re-examining Marxism, the lengthy discussion of Ben Gitlow's *I Confess*, and Lovestone's 1939 testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee, excerpts of which can be found in this section.

A new development had a powerful impact on the organisation. Under Bertram Wolfe's leadership, the ILLA had been participating with the Socialist Party, various pacifists, some liberals and even some isolationist conservatives in a 'Keep America Out of War' Committee – for which Bertram Wolfe had co-authored a book with Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas.¹ The progression of the war – particularly the victorious advance of Hitler's forces – caused a re-evaluation within the ILLA, with a majority around Lovestone taking issue with Wolfe's continued opposition to the war. Included here is a letter sent out by a group of Lovestoneite dissidents to various left-wing publications. They reported that the debate had grown nasty, Wolfe had resigned from the ILLA, and the organisation was preparing to dissolve.

The statement of dissolution – 'Towards a Genuine American Democratic Socialism!' – appeared in the final issue of *Workers' Age* (25 January 1941), which repeated themes from recent contributions by Lovestone, Herberg and Lewis Corey (appearing in this and the previous section of this volume), while speaking optimistically about the dissolution of the ILLA paving the way for 'a new start'.



¹ Wolfe and Thomas 1939.

1. Marxists and the Unions²

Jay Lovestone

I cannot emphasise too much, in an examination of our political approach or in a re-evaluation of our political approach, the need for us to reverse the current and to change the direction of relationship between radicals and the labor movement as a whole. This involves a complete break with the 'commissarship' psychology inherited from the Comintern, a complete break with the notion that we have the plan, the patent, the monopoly, just what the labor movement needs to be a 'real' labor movement. We do not create the labor movement; the labor movement provides the soil and supplies the life for the roots of our movement as a radical movement within it.

I might remind you of the advice given by Marx and Engels to the old German socialists in this country, warning them against trying to create the labor movement in their own image and against imposing on the developing labor movement their own ideas, urging them not to judge the labor movement by any of their own preconceived ideas. This advice is still thoroughly sound.

I believe all of us have suffered from this 'commissarship' psychology but we, in recent years, have begun to break with this approach.

I propose that we should consider the relationship between us and the developing labor movement from such an angle rather than from the one of looking down, superimposing, offering ourselves as the leaders instead of seeking to grow up with it and, being equipped with a certain type of understanding, therefore being able more easily to bring clarity and supply leadership to it, to win leadership in it.

² *Workers Age*, 26 March 1938, pp. 3, 6.

The 'Periphery' System

I think we should consider throwing completely overboard another organizational notion that we inherited in a sense from the Russian experience, and that is the practice of creating special organizations the moment some issue arises in the class struggle, instead of working with and through existing labor organizations. I now speak of the so-called 'periphery' organizations.

Or take the curse of 'conferencitis'. Whatever happens or does not happen – call a conference. And, if you do not have an organization that will send delegates, you have delegates who will call themselves organizations. And usually it means that you simply give instructions to Party-controlled organizations to send a delegate, regardless of the needs of that organization.

Now I can very readily understand why it was a sound practice for the Russians, especially immediately after the overthrow of Tsarism, to call conferences and set up all sorts of organizations. In Russia, prior to the revolution, the extent of organization among the workers was very small, the proportion of the working class of Russia, even for its size, which had experience in self-rule, in workers' democracy in its most limited form, in actual organization of class institutions, was very small in comparison with what we have in this country, or Germany had at one time, or England or France.

I think, given the revolution, with the Bolshevik Party at the helm, it was one means of educational experience for the workers in labor organization. But I think those reasons do not hold sufficiently here for us mechanically to comply and carry over those methods of organization.

Let the Trade Unions Act

As a matter of fact, they hurt the movement and waste its energies. Take the trade-union movement today. Why should we not fight for workers' rights, the right to organize, unemployment relief and the like through the existing trade unions? There are about seven million workers organized, primarily for economic purposes, but laying the basis for a real movement on these issues as well. Why not try to add vitality to this movement by getting it into the actual political struggles of today?

But what happens with most 'conferences' and 'periphery' organizations is that they do not stimulate the activity of the unions but devitalise and replace them, making them into no more than blotters and auxiliaries.

Suppose we are automobile workers who have a year or two of experience in trade unionism. We find ourselves now in a situation where we have lost our

jobs. We begin to say that the union used to be all right when we were working; it helped us then but apparently it was a short-time proposition – it cannot even help us hold our jobs today, let alone get wage increases. Why should I pay dues to the union? Now these fellows I met yesterday from the Workers Alliance, they are different. They are just for us without jobs. They invited me to the hall; they charge me practically nothing for dues and they are going to 'do the thing for me instead of the union'. You know the rest of the story.

The problem here is to get the unions themselves, as such, to take up the fight for unemployment relief, to defend the interests of their members when they are jobless as well as when they have work. I do not want to make any sweeping generalizations but I think that, for the present, we can say our slogan should be: everything in and through the unions!

Party and Union

Or take the question of the relation of party to trade union. We have had very serious quarrels with the Communist Party and with sections of the Socialist Party – they suffered from the same disease of domination and mechanical control of the trade unions, of considering them reserves for party emergencies and fields for exploitation. Let me say that, although we have always rejected and resisted this approach, yet, in some cases, we too have had a mechanical approach on relations with the unions.

We most emphatically reject the notion that the trade unions can or should be an appendage to, and auxiliary of, any political party.

The Communist Party, even though it has changed its routine procedure of working in the trade unions, still has the basically unsound attitude towards the trade-union movement as an auxiliary, subsidiary, secondary movement. The remarks by comrade Miles as to the situation in Flint have much more import than the figures would reveal. The Communist Party in the auto union, until we stepped in and stopped it, was misusing and milking that organization in the most shameful manner. It was really a form of Stalinist racketeering!

I do not think we need spend too much time on the question of our own attitude toward the trade unions. The prestige of our organization for our work in the trade unions is far greater than we ourselves realize. If we have succeeded in anything, it is in working out a sound trade-union theory and in developing sound relations between the class-conscious radicals in the unions and the movement as a whole. But there are still many ideas and practices that we should examine critically and discard if necessary.

Our Aim and Perspective

What is our perspective and aim? What kind of movement do we want to develop with our group? We strive today to be a kernel for the crystallization and emergence of a new phase of revolutionary socialism, of a new radicalism, if I may use that term. Who else can it be in this country today?

Politically, who else can it be? Can it be the Communist Party? Why, it is part of the government machinery. It is a direct menace to working-class interests in this country. The Trotskyites? They suffer as much from the 'Russian orientation', they are as little genuinely a part of the American labor movement as the Stalinists. Like the Stalinists, they are an offshoot or appendage to a Russian political faction, not a part of the American labor movement. The Socialist Party? Some sound elements there are but the party as a whole, it seems to me, cannot fulfil that function.

What are we aiming at? We are not aiming at establishing a rival labor movement, either economic or political. We do not look at things from outside in. We are striving to become an energizing, leavening, guiding force within the labor movement, bringing to it socialist clarity and understanding. Whatever tasks the working class has to accomplish in this country, it will be the labor movement that will accomplish it and not we or anybody else behind the back of the labor movement, so to speak. And as an integral part of it, we have to help the labor movement recognise and measure up to its tasks. That is our outlook. That is our perspective.

We have examples of such work. The Fabians were reformists but they did considerable educational work towards the formation of a socialistic Labor Party in England. For years, the Independent Labor Party of Great Britain was a source of class consciousness, militancy and leadership in the British Labor Party. It is along such lines that we want to work in this country.

Question of Independence

The question of 'independence' – I use 'independence' in the political sense primarily. Many of you have not the slightest idea of how really dependent we once were in the Communist Party – and, of course, the situation is far worse there today – in trying to deal with the most simple problems in this country. I will never forget that, at one time, even the location of the American Party headquarters had to be settled in Moscow.

The type of contract to be signed in this union or that would become a subject not only for us but for intrigues in Moscow and party manipulations in

China. Now, in such a situation, what sort of self-reliance and leadership can you develop in dealing with the problems of the class struggle?

Political independence means the ability to work out policies on your own responsibility, in the light of your own experience, based on the conditions and needs of the class struggle at home. Only on such foundations can a sound internationalism be built up, not the fraudulent 'internationalism' of Stalinism or Trotskyism. Of course, we do not discard the experiences of the revolutionary struggles in Russia or Germany or elsewhere, but we want to extract from them what is applicable and useful for our own problems and not to copy everything mechanically. And nobody can do this for us; we must do it ourselves. This is what political independence means in the light of our present discussion.

2. Convention of a New Beginning³

Will Herberg

The 4 July Convention of our group will not be just the usual gathering to hear reports of activity, consider resolutions on this or that question and then map out policies in various fields. If our Convention is to live up to the expectations that all of us place in it, it will be the Convention of a new beginning, the embodiment of a new departure in the American labor movement.

Dissolution of the Old Approach

The dissolution of our old approach is now an established fact. It is an inevitable consequence of the utter bankruptcy of post-war radicalism that we have witnessed in the last few years. As movements represented by their respective organizations, official Social Democracy, Communism and anarchism are bankrupt, bankrupt politically and morally, bankrupt even in terms of their own pretensions. Reformistic Social Democracy was ready to sacrifice socialism for the sake of social reform, revolution for the sake of democracy; it only succeeded in opening up the way to reaction and Fascism. The Communist International was ready to carry through with ruthlessness and determination a series of splits in the Socialist movement for the sake of gaining revolutionary independence and freedom of action; it has now abandoned every pretence to revolutionary principles and has raised the surrender of its political independence in the people's front into a sacred dogma. Anarchism always prided itself on its intransigence, its moral integrity and freedom from corruption of parliamentary politics; in Spain, anarchist ministerialism and the rotten politics of parliamentary compromise are flourishing in rank growth. What then is there left? Blind opportunism, political intrigue, moral corruption, bureaucracy! This is the pass to which the international workers' movement,

3 *Workers Age*, 25 June 1938, p. 6.

numbering many millions in its ranks, has come in this twentieth year of dreadful 'peace'!

That there are forces of life and hope making themselves felt amidst the general political disintegration, the International Conference recently held in Paris, representing the independent socialist and communist elements as well as oppositional tendencies in the Social-Democratic and Stalinist movements, is evidence enough. But these forces of life can realize their promise only if they have the courage to face the facts as they are, only if they have the courage to make the new departure so imperatively demanded today.

Futility of Traditional American Radicalism

These ideas have already become current in our group, although it is doubtful that their full implications have been drawn. But there is another side of the question, perhaps even more significant in the long run, which we must now emphasise. It is about time to recognise, with all due respect to the past, that the whole traditional approach of American radicalism – the approach of the Socialists, the Communists, the IWW and the socialistic liberals alike – has been generally futile and wrong-headed from the very first. Traditional American radicalism has always looked abroad for inspiration, experience and guidance: its effort has been largely directed towards mechanically 'translating' European approaches into American terms without much regard to relevancy or significance. This habitual tendency to imitate foreign patterns, under conditions so vastly different, is the very hallmark of American radicalism and is striking evidence of its profound alienation from American reality.

At the same time, traditional American radicalism has generally had a pronounced strain of sectarianism and dualism in its makeup. By and large the mission of the radical group has been, and still is, conceived of as the creation of a labor movement in its own image, a movement that would be a mere extended shadow of itself – apart from and, if necessary, opposed to the existing labor movement. We are all acquainted with trade-union dualism and its constant recurrence in American labor history. But political dualism is an equally persistent trait and equally dangerous, especially under present-day conditions. Political dualism has led radicals to picture an independent working-class political movement in America as a mass socialist party along conventional European lines. Very little understanding has been shown of the specific features of American development that make for independent labor politics in the form of a labor party as a political federation of trade unions. The indifference, suspicion, even hostility, manifested towards the

labor-party idea in American radical circles, strongly persisting among the Trotskyites and in certain sections of the Socialist Party today, as well as the sinister perversion of the idea by the Stalinists, constitute a striking indication of this fact.

Anti-Dualism and Anti-Sectarianism

For us the very crux of the new departure must be a break with these unwholesome traditions. At bottom, the whole problem is that of the relation of our group to the masses.

Our first principle must be anti-dualism. It must become our deep and abiding conviction that the great objectives of labor, immediate and ultimate alike, can be achieved only in and through the labor movement as it is developing today in response to the needs of the workers. We do not want 'our own' trade-union movement, nor do we want 'our own' political movement of labor. Nothing can be accomplished apart from, behind the back of, or against, the real labor movement. It is easier to say these words than to carry them out consistently, such is the weight of the dualistic tradition; but to apply this idea consistently in all its consequences is surely the very essence of our new approach.

With equal firmness do we take our stand against sectarianism. Our aim is not to remake the labor movement in our own image, in accordance with our own pet recipes, but to bring ourselves in line with the fundamental strivings, with the inner tendencies of the labor movement as it is and as it is becoming. Too often have American radicals tended to look upon the labor movement as a sort of field of operations for their doctrines if not as an auxiliary of their groups. We must make a clean break with any such notions. We are part of the labor movement, an organic and inseparable part – and the part is not greater than the whole!

Our Role in the Labor Movement

What is the role we aspire to in the light of this orientation? We want to make our group the *political concentration of the most militant and advanced elements in every trade union, in every labor organization, on every field of the labor struggle*. We want to make our group into an effective instrument to serve the labor movement as a militant, inspiring, leavening force on every front. We want to be in a position to give real assistance to the labor movement

towards greater clarity and class consciousness, and therefore towards greater effectiveness in the class struggle. We want to help it towards the conscious assimilation of its own experiences, towards the conscious understanding of its own fundamental aims and tendencies. Far be it from us to imply that there is nothing wrong with the labor movement as it is or that everything will take care of itself spontaneously, so to speak. Nothing of the sort. But the labor movement can be strengthened, improved and brought higher levels of clarity and power only from within. And we aspire to be the force within that strives consciously towards this goal.

Someone once described our organization as the political 'pep group' of the labor movement. I think this is a splendid characterization of at least one aspect of our role, and the most important aspect at that. If we can only live up to this characterization, then we will certainly go a long way towards the fulfilment of our mission.

But for this, we must keep our eyes on America. Our program, our strategic course, our policies and tactics must be drawn from our own social soil, from a systematic study of the conditions of the American class struggle in the light of Marxism. Of course, we must be ready to learn from experience abroad – but this experience must be evaluated in the light of American reality and transmuted into American terms before it can be of direct practical value to us in our work.

Our new orientation is an orientation of the most thoroughgoing, uncompromising independence. We have long lost our political kinship with official 'Communism', our tendency to look upon things from the point of view of their relation to Stalinism. But independence means much more. It means the full recognition that we are out on our own, out to build a really new socialist (or communist) movement in this country, along fundamentally new lines. In this task, we can expect little help, because we can expect little understanding, either from the Socialist Party or from the Trotskyites. Among certain Socialists, there appears to be some faint notion of what a real revolutionary-socialist movement in America should look like, but the general run of Socialists, together with the Trotskyites, are poles apart from us on the question of orientation. We may agree, and do agree, on this or that issue, but we disagree with what is so much more important, our fundamental outlook. The Trotskyites consciously and belligerently, the socialists more as a matter of custom and habit, champion the dualistic, sectarian approach that has proved so futile in the past. For the Trotskyites, indeed, it is their special point of pride, as is natural with any sect of their character.

Cooperation with the Socialists or Trotskyites on specific issues is, of course, possible and necessary. But, for the present at any rate, we cannot look in that

direction for any real collaboration in laying the foundations of the new movement that conditions so imperatively demand.

With our new approach, we must appeal directly to the more advanced and progressive workers now coming to the fore everywhere in the labor movement. If our appeal reaches and influences Socialist Party members or Trotskyites or even Stalinites, we can only rejoice, but it is not on this that we pin our hope.

To clarify the new approach in all its implications, to make it a part of our very political existence: this is the task of the Convention. It is a tremendous task but the whole future of our movement depends upon how it is faced and how it is accomplished.

Let us make it indeed the Convention of a new beginning!

3. Testimony of Jay Lovestone Before House Un-American Activities Committee⁴

Saturday 2 December 1939.

The committee met at 10 am in the caucus room, House Office Building, Hon. Joe Starnes presiding.

Present: Messrs. Starnes (AL), [Jerry] Voorhis (CA), and [Noah M.] Mason (IL).

Also present: Mr. Rhea Whitley, counsel to the committee and Mr. J.B. Matthews, chief committee investigator.

...

(The witness was duly sworn by Mr. Starnes.)

Mr. Starnes: You may proceed with the examination, Mr. Matthews.

Mr. Matthews: Please state your full name for the record.

Mr. Lovestone: My name is Jay Lovestone.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask if it would be permissible, in view of the time consideration today, for us to have the routine questions and answers concerning the personal affairs of the witness submitted in writing.

⁴ *Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States: Hearings Before a Special Committee on Un-American Activities*, 76th Congress, First Session, on H. Res. 282 . . . : Volume 11: 28, 30, 31 October, 1, 2, 3, 27, 29 and 30 November and 1, 2 and 3 December 1939 at Washington, DC. (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), pp. 7095–188.

Mr. Starnes: He may file that information with the committee.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lovestone, are you appearing here this morning under subpoena?

Mr. Lovestone: I have a subpoena in my pocket.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Browder, Mr. Foster, and other leaders of the Communist Party appeared here and volunteered their testimony. Perhaps you have some explanation of why you have not volunteered to supply this committee with the voluminous information which your experience has provided you with reference to the Communist Party or Communist movement.

Mr. Lovestone: Frankly, I was almost shocked to hear that the Messrs. [Earl] Browder, [Max] Bedacht, [William Z.] Foster and other recognised paid official spokesmen of Stalinism in this country appeared before you voluntarily, or that they volunteered to testify. I have refused to volunteer for the following reasons: first of all, I did not associate myself with a great deal of the procedure of the committee. I think that a good deal of the labor problem which the committee handles can be best handled by the labor movement. Secondly, I would like for the committee and everyone else to know that it is the last thing in the world I would want to do, in the light of my present political position, to be found in the neighbourhood, the area, or district where even the dust of the Stalinist machine in this country would fall on me, or where in the slightest way somebody might connect me up with them politically. I hesitated, and did not want to come before the committee for those reasons I have given.

Mr. Matthews: What are your business connections?

Mr. Lovestone: I am at present Secretary of the Independent Labor League of America, with headquarters in New York, and with branches in the principal other industrial sections throughout the country.

Mr. Matthews: I would like to ask you something more about the program of your organization later. Will you please state what is the salary of your present position?

Mr. Lovestone: Statistically, my salary is \$35 per week. That is, I am supposed to get \$35 per week when I get it. Sometimes we do and sometimes we do not.

Mr. Matthews: How long have you been active in the trade-union and socialist movement in the United States?

Mr. Lovestone: In one form or another, I have been an organizer politically, as we say, since 1912. I have been giving my full time to the labor movement for more than 20 years.

Mr. Matthews: Will you tell us briefly what you have done during that period of time in the terms of the activities in which you have been engaged?

Mr. Lovestone: I was in the Socialist Party, and very active, and then became active with the organizers of the left wing of the Socialist Party back in 1916. Later on, I was one of the organizers of the Communist Party. It was apparent, as a result of the split of the Socialist Party in 1916, that we were to have a Communist Party. I have held every office, from Branch Secretary to General Secretary, of that party. I might say that I have received or been subjected to the highest honors of the Communist Party in my time save one, and that is liquidation by a firing squad.

Mr. Matthews: Were you one of the founders of the Communist International?

Mr. Lovestone: I was one of the founders of the Communist International, and of the American section, which was among the first to be organized in the Comintern.

Mr. Matthews: Were you the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the United States before or approximately immediately before the assumption of that office by Earl Browder?

Mr. Lovestone: I was the last General Secretary of the Communist Party before Earl Browder was appointed General Secretary.

Mr. Matthews: Are there any other offices that you have held that you think are proper to introduce into the record at this time?

Mr. Lovestone: I have been a member of every Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party as long as I was active in the Communist Party. I have been a member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International for a number of years, and was a member of the confidential committees. I was

also a member of the Committee of Elders at the sixth World Congress of the Communist International.

Mr. Matthews: Did you attend the sixth World Congress?

Mr. Lovestone: I attended and reported on this Congress.

Mr. Matthews: Was that held in the summer of 1928?

Mr. Lovestone: That was held for a good part of the summer of 1928 [17 July–1 September] at Moscow.

Mr. Matthews: Have you made other trips to Moscow?

Mr. Lovestone: I reckon I made quite a number of trips to Moscow?

Mr. Matthews: Do you have an approximate idea of how many trips you have made?

Mr. Lovestone: I would have to estimate it. Approximately, I would say that I must have gone over there eight or 10 times.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lovestone, what are your principal writings?

Mr. Lovestone: I have written some books, I have written a lot of pamphlets and I have been the editor of a paper at one time – that is, of a Communist paper.

Mr. Matthews: Do you mean *The Daily Worker*?

Mr. Lovestone: I was editing that for a while, and I edited monthly magazines. It would be quite a job to tabulate them from memory, giving the names of my writings. Of course, you know that better than I do.

Mr. Matthews: I have a number of your writings that I would like to have introduced later on. Were you the author of any special Party documents of importance?

Mr. Lovestone: I was one of the authors of the first program of the Communist movement in this country, and for a number of years I reckon I was the author of most of the political documents that the Communist Party issued.

Mr. Matthews: Did you know Lenin personally?

Mr. Lovestone: I never met him in the sense of knowing him.

Mr. Matthews: Have you ever met Stalin?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, sir.

Mr. Matthews: Have you had private conferences with Stalin?

Mr. Lovestone: Many, many of them.

Mr. Matthews: Have you ever met Molotov?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, sir.

Mr. Matthews: Have you been personally acquainted with other top leaders of the Communist International or the Russian Communist Party?

Mr. Lovestone: I have been, without question, but most of those I have been acquainted with are dead now.

Mr. Matthews: How did they come to their deaths?

Mr. Lovestone: Through liquidation by firing squads.

Mr. Matthews: That is what you referred to when you said you had had every other honor conferred on you except liquidation by a firing squad?

Mr. Lovestone: That is what I underscored – not what I referred to.

Mr. Matthews: When did you break with Moscow?

Mr. Lovestone: Officially in 1929 – in July or June 1929; but in my mind I have been doing a lot of thinking, which is a difficult job. Officially, the conditions in the Communist movement culminated in an open break in 1929.

Mr. Matthews: In enumerating the reasons for your break with Moscow, what, in your mind, was the principal issue at stake?

Mr. Lovestone: It would be hard to say that one issue was the principal one. There were quite a number of very important questions over which we were developing quite serious differences. If I may be permitted to enumerate some of them as they come to me after 10 years' time, and attempt to forget a great deal of it, I would say they were the following: first of all, we had a very violent conflict over the question of how the Party's International should be run, managed or led. We advocated what was known as Party democracy, and Stalin and his puppets, while they did not outright reject it, did actually vitiate every concept of Party democracy that we once thought had to be in the International.

Secondly, we had a vigorous clash with the Russian Communist Party leaders as to the type of leadership for the International organization as such – that is, in the Communist International. Our position was that the Communist International should have a collective and genuinely international leadership, in which Russia could be first, but the first among equals. We were against a monopoly of leadership by the Russian Communist Party.

In the third place, we differed with the Communist International, which, in actuality, meant the Stalin-led Russian Communist Party, over a series of questions involving the American institution. For example, we were denounced as exceptionalists, and that was, by the way, a high crime in the church. That was because we had stressed that there were certain historical peculiarities and industrial conditions in the United States distinct from those in other lands. We denied their claim that in the United States there was as much radicalism or as much of a radical labor movement as there was in a number of European countries. We differed with the Stalin leadership every time on the entire American economic and political trends. The position of Herr Stalin was that the American economic system was going to pieces, and that this was the last and final crisis for capitalism in the United States. We said that the Communist Party was headed for a big job in creating a crisis of very grave consequence to capitalism in the United States; that it was far from finished, and that the beast still had a lot of kick in it. For that we were roundly denounced. The theory of Stalin was that the revolution was pretty much round the corner in the United States. We would have liked to believe that theory, but our mental processes would not allow ourselves to be distorted by wish-thinking.

Then we differed with the Stalinites over the question of dual unionism. The Stalinites developed a theory that in the United States it was necessary to split the American Federation of Labor and smash it to smithereens, and organize a new revolutionary union that would simply be an appendage of the Communist Party. That was resisted, rejected and resented. We resented that conception or principle, although, in fairness to the facts, I must say that as a disciplined Communist I did go along with those obnoxious principles for a number of months.

We also differed with the Stalinites over the theory of social fascism. At that time the Stalinites had a notion that everybody who did not fully agree with them was at best what they call a social fascist. I felt myself or ourselves a little more mature and would not take that. I am not going into any detail. There may be other reasons, but I reckon they are about the principal issues over which we broke at that time.

...

Mr. Lovestone: ... [I]t was not until sometime in 1936 that we gave up our desire for unity with the Communist Party. Sometime in 1936 we changed our minds and said we not only did not want unity, but we did not want to have anything to do with it.

Mr. Matthews: You mean for a period of approximately seven years there were discussions as to unification of the groups?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes; it took us about seven years to learn the lesson we know now.

Mr. Matthews: Yes.

Mr. Lovestone: You see, Mr. Matthews, it is pretty hard for people who have not literally been brought up in the Communist movement to understand the type of devotion and loyalty we developed through our ideal and through the organization under whose banners the ideal is supposed to be enrolled. For a number of years many of us gave everything we had toward making the Communist movement a clean, effective, vigorous movement in this country, a movement which would overthrow capitalism and establish a socialist society. We saw mistakes inside, we went along with a lot of things which in a specific sense we were not in accord with, but out of loyalty to the organization we worked inside in the hope that we could change it from within.

A little later we were sort of crowded away from this concept, and, I might say, with the very able and very effective assistance of Stalin, thanks to his expulsion of us. If it had not been for that assistance we would still be floundering in the swamps. But we were expelled with the assistance of Stalin, and, as I have said, for a number of years we were struggling to reform the Communist Party from without, to make it a *bona fide*, socialist, working-class organization, and we learned from experience, much more than from books, that the Communist Party cannot be reformed from without. So we arrived at the decision that the Communist Party not only could not be reformed from

within or without, but that the first job of the American working class is to do entirely without the type of political organization that is now parading as the Communist Party of the United States.

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Mr. Matthews: It is your understanding that the Comintern has become a branch of the Foreign Commissariat of the Soviet Union?

Mr. Lovestone: It is not only my understanding; it is my understanding based on experience that the Communist International today reflects nothing but the foreign policies of the Soviet government.

Mr. Matthews: There were factional breaks which developed to a very sharp point in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In the course of the development of these factional struggles was there maneuvering for the use of the Communist International as a factional weapon?

Mr. Lovestone: May I be permitted to go back a bit?

Mr. Matthews: Certainly.

Mr. Lovestone: I would say the Communist International, in relation to the Russian Communist Party, went through the following stages: In the first days of the October Revolution – that is the Bolshevik Revolution – the Russians were leaders through prestige, through achievement, through the fact that they conquered one-sixth of the world for socialism. We had an attitude of almost religious veneration toward them, the Russian leaders.

Mr. Matthews: Was it almost or was it complete?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, the line of demarcation would be very thin. Speaking for myself, I would say it was quite complete, and if you want to take the word 'quite' out, I would say it was complete. But I must say, in fairness to the Russian leaders, at that time they did not advocate this; they did not nurture this. Later on, with the death of Lenin and the development of factionalism, sharp unprincipled factionalism – I would say suicidal factionalism – in the Russian Party, the Comintern policies began to be involved in and determined by the factional struggles inside the Russian Party, with the result that each

faction played for control of the Communist International as a weapon against another faction. We were hesitant to adopt resolutions endorsed by one faction or the other.

Mr. Matthews: You mean in the United States, Mr. Lovestone?

Mr. Lovestone: In the American organization, or the French organization, or any other organization. For a while the Communist International policies in the respective sections reflected very much the factional struggles in the Communist International, but from that we came to the third phase of our relations, and that is the present one, and that present one did not begin with our expulsion. It set in a little before. That was the moment when the Communist International had been reduced actually to a puppet organization, and its policies reflected through the mechanical transference of tactics from Russia to other countries, and strictly speaking, to be solely Russian foreign policy.

It is necessary to differentiate the stages, because it would be unfair to Stalin and those who follow him today to give the impression that what I once called a running-sore in the Communist International, and later a cancer in the Comintern, began with him. It had begun even before.

Mr. Matthews: The headquarters of the Communist Party of the United States were once in Chicago, I believe?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes.

Mr. Matthews: They were originally in Chicago?

Mr. Lovestone: Oh, at one time they were in New York and then I moved it to Chicago.

Mr. Matthews: Who moved the headquarters from Chicago to New York, where they are at the present time? Was that done by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the United States?

Mr. Lovestone: Formally, yes; the Central Committee decides where the headquarters are to be.

Mr. Matthews: Did the Central Committee have to get permission from Moscow to make the move?

Mr. Lovestone: May I answer this question not by a 'yes' or a 'no'?

Mr. Lovestone: We have had for a number of years in the American Communist Party a factional struggle, financed indirectly, propagated and perpetrated by factions inside the Russian Communist Party. When the Central Committee, at that time led by Ruthenberg, now dead – he died a natural death in this country – proposed to move the headquarters to New York, the opposition, at that time led by Foster, was against it, and appealed to Moscow, to the International, and for two years we could not move our headquarters until Moscow gave us their approval for the move. Then Moscow decided it would be all right to move the headquarters from Chicago to New York, and that was the end and the settlement of the question.

Mr. Matthews: I take it, then, your answer is 'yes', with embellishments?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, with emphasis, not embellishments.

Mr. Matthews: Did the Communist Party or its Central Committee, in this country, have to obtain permission of the Comintern to hold annual Conventions in this country?

Mr. Lovestone: To hold them annually or at any time. No Convention could be held without permission of the executives of the Communist International.

Mr. Matthews: When Mr. Foster was on the stand here he said that was simply a polite gesture and had not substance to it. Would you say that this was the character of this permission?

Mr. Lovestone: We do not have much politeness, even in these days, within the Communist International, so that it was neither a gesture nor politeness. It was a matter of painful fact to us.

Mr. Matthews: In *The Communist*, a monthly publication of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, issue of January 1929, you had an article, Mr. Lovestone. On examining the article I find that you speak very highly of Bukharin. Do you recall that article?

Mr. Lovestone: I do not recall the article, but I recall the speech on which this article was based. I recall that speech very well, because that speech was the occasion for quite a campaign against me in Moscow.

Mr. Matthews: What was the nature and result of that campaign?

Mr. Lovestone: Let me say this: I was Secretary of the Communist Party. I reported to the meeting of its National Committee in December 1928. The factional fight in the Russian Communist Party had gone to extremes. Everybody was rallying to endorse Stalin. I was not only a personal friend of Bukharin, but I had fundamental agreement with him on international questions, though on Russian questions I had agreement with Stalin and not with him. In that meeting I objected to the American Communist Party lining up [behind one or the other]. I said: 'We will wear no Stalin buttons, and we will wear no Bukharin buttons, and we will not engage in gangsterism against Stalin or Bukharin'. I said that Stalin was my leader as leader of the Communist Party; that I respected him, had high regard for his opinion and calibre of thinking.

Mr. Matthews: He was at that time the official head of the Comintern?

Mr. Lovestone: He was at that time the official leader of the Communist International. Saying that, a cable was sent to Moscow. That cable was passed around throughout the International, and that pretty much served as the blot on my political death certificate in my relations with the Stalin leadership.

Mr. Matthews: What has happened to Bukharin?

Mr. Lovestone: I guess Bukharin went the way of all Bolshevik flesh in Russia – execution.

Mr. Matthews: At least that is the official report, is it not?

Mr. Lovestone: I think Stalin is telling the truth in this case.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lovestone, you mentioned the question of social fascism as one of the reasons for your break with Moscow. Will you please explain briefly what was meant by social fascism?

Mr. Lovestone: It is a form of lunacy that defies explanation. It was a theory which said, in substance, that precisely those who stood for advanced social legislation or Socialism, as advocated by the Socialist parties of the world, that these were the most dangerous people; that actually they were Fascists, but they were using Socialist phrases to hide their pernicious objectives. That meant, for example, that in these days President Roosevelt might qualify, in

moments of extreme generosity, as a social communist, but Norman Thomas was a social fascist. In these days I cannot qualify even as a social fascist.

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Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lovestone, can you throw some light on the question of whether your break with Moscow became a *cause celebre* in the Communist International.

Mr. Lovestone: Well, I never called it such, but it has been called that, and I can only say that in my opinion there was justification for it being called that, and that the following very probably would be the reasons for that appellation being given to our break with Moscow. First of all, this was an attack by the Stalin group on the entire Party and an entire section of the Communist International. We had had a Convention; we had an overwhelming majority of delegates; we had had decisions, and these were all overruled and thrown out. Secondly, the size of the majority attained by our leadership under the democratic processes in the Communist Party was such as you generally get in plebiscites and not in elections; it was so one-sided.

Mr. Matthews: In other words, in the category of 90 percent?

Mr. Lovestone: Oh, yes; and it was genuine. It was not gotten by airplanes. Then the leadership of the American Communist Party, myself amongst them, had the longest period of confidence of the dominant Russian leaders, a longer period than any other leadership of any national section, and when the war came on us it was quite a surprise. Besides that, in the fight against us there were introduced a certain number of methods and weapons of struggle which you are reading about in the papers now. I might say I was invited to Moscow 10 years before Estonia was, and I went, and came back with less than Estonia has at present. We stayed there a long time. The character of the struggle we waged right inside of Moscow was of the most stubborn and the most courageous fights that the Russians ever had on their hands.

Mr. Matthews: Did Stalin himself speak of your fight as a stubborn and courageous fight?

Mr. Lovestone: I recall at the moment the words of Stalin. If we had a bear by the tail, they had something tougher than a bear by the tail, except we did not realize they could swing from the tail to our throats. That made it quite a *cause celebre*.

Then there was the way the American Party was 'enlightened' at that time. The word was not 'liquidated' but 'enlightened'. They enlightened you, and when you were enlightened, you were through.

That also gave a lot of emphasis to the significance of the struggle. But more than that, it was a battle which we continued in the Communist International (that is, the American Party) which was the signal for a revolt – to my regret an unsuccessful revolt against the entire regime and policies of the Communist International as dominated by the Stalin clique in the Russian Communist Party.

Mr. Matthews: How long were you in Moscow during that episode?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, I would say –

Mr. Matthews: Did you go over in March 1929?

Mr. Lovestone: I left in March, and I – that is, I left the United States in March, and I left Moscow or fled from Moscow in June, I think, sometime in June, the end of June or the beginning of July. My dates would not be accurate on that. I have tried to forget them, and therefore I do not remember them in a calendar sense with any mathematical precision.

Mr. Matthews: When you speak of your flight from Moscow, do you mean you left by airplane?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, I mean a little more. I mean I left by airplane and I had to do some good high flying. I left with formal permission, because as one of the executives of the Communist International I was entitled to go back to my country and to my own Party for a period of two months to rearrange my personal affairs before I assumed work elsewhere. But though I had formal permission, I did not have real permission.

I managed, with the assistance of a number of friends and comrades of mine, most of whom are now executed, to leave Moscow quite successfully, I think because Stalin did not know that I was out until four days after I had been out of Moscow, which I consider a major achievement, for myself anyway.

Mr. Voorhis: I would like to go back just a little bit. Mr. Lovestone, I wonder if you would go into a little more detail about the majority that your group had in the Party, and whether you can give us any details about that. I mean any elections that might have been held or anything like that; what the figures were on them and things of that sort.

Mr. Lovestone: May I answer that question in two parts?

Mr. Voorhis: Yes.

Mr. Lovestone: First of all, the method of our securing the majority and its size; and secondly the method employed here in the destruction of the majority. May I?

Mr. Voorhis: Yes.

Mr. Lovestone: We had about 10 weeks of discussion in the Communist Party press and Communist Party meetings, general membership meetings, city meetings, branch meetings. There were presented at these discussions what we called theses. That means two statements of policy. Delegates were then elected on a *pro rata* basis and the delegates were chosen on the basis of which thesis they voted for, the one presented by myself or the one presented at that time by Foster. The Communist International was operating behind the scenes, not yet fully in the open, to support the Foster faction. It was generally known at that time in the American Communist Party that Stalin was manipulating on behalf of Foster. Despite that, when it came to the election of delegates I think we had more than 100 delegates to the Convention.

Mr. Voorhis: To the Party Convention.

Mr. Lovestone: To the [sixth] Communist Party Convention, which was held in March 1929 in New York City.

Mr. Voorhis: Who elected these delegates? Were they elected by the locals?

Mr. Lovestone: They were elected by branches, which chose delegates to district conventions, and the district conventions elected delegates to the National Convention.

Mr. Voorhis: In the branches all members voted?

Mr. Lovestone: All members in good standing, which means those members who had paid their dues.

Mr. Voorhis: What I am after, the election was entirely democratic, everybody participated who was in good standing?

Mr. Lovestone: The basis of the election was extremely democratic, because any time anybody was in opposition, he would raise a question and we were ready enough to yield, because we did not want to have issues. More than that, we had complete control of the Party apparatus, but we gave the minority at that time equal time and equal space in the Party press and at Party meetings. It was a *bona fide* democratic Party election, as we know it in this country.

Mr. Voorhis: After the branches had elected delegates, those delegates met in each district, is that right?

Mr. Lovestone: That is right.

Mr. Voorhis: Out of that meeting were chosen the delegates to the National Convention?

Mr. Lovestone: On a *pro rata* basis of membership strength in the districts.

Mr. Voorhis: What section of the country did the 10 percent of delegates that you did not control come from?

Mr. Lovestone: It would be hard to say. Some came from California, some came from New York. As a matter of fact, I might state very frankly if we at that time were to take all the delegates on the basis of majority versus minority we could have had the entire Convention ourselves, but we thought that would be unsound, that it would tend to crush the minority whom we wanted to absorb and work with as comrades in one organization.

Mr. Matthews: Was this minority under the leadership of Foster and Bittelman?

Mr. Lovestone: Officially the leaders of the minority were Foster and Bittelman; actually the leader of the minority was Stalin.

Mr. Matthews: The opposition or the minority has been designated in Party publications frequently as the Foster-Bittelman?

Mr. Lovestone: Oh, yes – or the Bittelman-Foster, because Bittelman can read Russian and that qualified him more for the leadership.

Mr. Matthews: I would like to ask you if there was ever any dispute on the part of Stalin or the Russian leaders concerning the fact of a majority of the Party in this country supporting the policies which you represented?

Mr. Lovestone: Never at all.

Mr. Matthews: In Stalin's own speeches before the American Commission [of the ECCI] in Moscow he made frequent reference, did he not, to your group as the Majority Group in the Party?

Mr. Lovestone: Stalin admitted this consistently.

Mr. Matthews: And I see here before me in his speech that he even referred to your support as that of 99 percent of the American party.

Mr. Lovestone: Well, he tried to challenge it a bit by bringing it up to 99 percent.

Mr. Matthews: Yes –

Mr. Lovestone: Actually we did not have 99 percent of the membership, but we could have taken, as I said, 100 percent of the delegates. We had, I think, about 85 percent of the rank-and-file with us in the average voting.

Mr. Matthews: How were you treated in Moscow during your dispute with the Stalin leadership of the Comintern?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, when we came in, we had a sort of mixed treatment at the start. We were hailed, and also we were suspected a bit, and in general we were treated like calves being fattened for the slaughter; treated very well, fed very well. I might say we began our sessions with black caviar, and by the time the issue got hotter we were served only red caviar. But we were treated all right in the beginning in a general way. Later on the temperature went down considerably below the freezing-point.

Mr. Matthews: Did Stalin and Molotov personally intervene in these discussions in Moscow?

Mr. Lovestone: I might say that it is my opinion that both Stalin and Molotov spoke more often and talked more at length in the American Commission handling the American Party crisis at that time than they had done at – I would not say at any time – all the time in their lives in the International up to that time, plus all the time in their lives in the International since that time. In other words, they spent more words and more time and more energy on our

American question in that Commission than they have done in it in their entire lives as leaders of the Communist International.

...

Mr. Matthews: Were you and Mr. Gitlow considered the leaders of this group, acting in defiance of the collected wills in the hands of Stalin?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, sir.

Mr. Matthews: I see there are references through here [in the transcript of Stalin's speeches to the American Commission] to yourself and to Gitlow as the leaders of this defiance.

Mr. Lovestone: That is correct.

Mr. Matthews: On page 14 of the second speech – no, this is the 6 May [1929] speech – Stalin said: 'The Secretariat of the Central Executive Committee of the American Communist Party must be altered and people added to it who are capable of recognizing the class struggle of the workers against the capitalist class and not only the factional struggle . . . '.

Do you know, Mr. Lovestone, how Stalin proposed to alter the Secretariat of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party in any manner other than through the processes which you have described in answer to Congressman Voorhis's question?

Mr. Lovestone: I think Stalin's arithmetic is slightly inaccurate here. Before he added, he subtracted. I was subtracted and Browder was added. The Secretariat, if I recall correctly, was then given a new majority. That is, the minority of yesterday, by a process of Stalinist political alchemy, was transformed into a majority since then, and continues now.

Mr. Matthews: What did Stalin propose, at least formally, to do with you, Mr. Lovestone, after subtracting you from the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of the United States?

Mr. Lovestone: That is an embarrassing question, but it is not as embarrassing to answer as it would have been if carried out. Well, I was first of all, not to go back to the United States.

Mr. Matthews: By the way, before you answer that, I think perhaps the words of Stalin himself on this point might serve as a basis for your answer. Stalin said: 'Comrades Lovestone and Bittelman must be recalled and placed at the disposal of the Comintern'.

Where did Stalin mean you should be recalled from?

Mr. Lovestone: Recalled from the United States and recalled from my home, and recalled from the American Communist Party.

Mr. Matthews: Recalled to Moscow and there placed at the disposal of the Comintern?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, I might give you a little more detail on that. First of all, I was not to go to any country where the English language was spoken, because if I could get a chance to talk the English language I might do some damage. Secondly, I was to stay an indeterminate period in Moscow, and Stalin said: 'I sit there, you sit here. We are both Old Bolsheviks and friends'. Even then I was a little suspicious of friendship, in the political sense, in Moscow. And after I had been sort of politically sterilised I would then be sent to a very exciting place like Afghanistan or Persia to start a revolution in the desert; a sort of foundation of sand.

Mr. Matthews: You mean that was actually proposed to you?

Mr. Lovestone: That was proposed to me, yes. I might say this: I did not like it. I also must confess I did not want it.

Mr. Voorhis: Who was going to do this recalling? That is what I would like to know. I mean practically. I understand about it, but I mean what machinery, what was to be gone through in this process of recalling you from your own country?

Mr. Lovestone: You must know, even in those days Russia did not lack machinery. It did not always work very well. There was the Executive Committee of the Communist International, and that Executive Committee had a working committee called the Secretariat. In that Secretariat were the representatives of the leading sections or parties of the Communist International. That Secretariat would be the one, formally, to make the decision. But actually the decision would be made for it in the Russian Political Bureau, and then the members of the Russian delegation to the Secretariat of the Comintern would make the

proposal, or they would get somebody else to make the proposal, and then they would endorse it. And once that was proposed or endorsed, you could apply addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division – the decision was made.

Mr. Voorhis: What I want more particularly to get at is: you were an American –

Mr. Lovestone: That is right.

Mr. Voorhis: Was it generally accepted practice that if a decision was made in the way you have just described and you received a communication to that effect, that it was then up to you – that you had to go and obey what they said?

Mr. Lovestone: If I wanted to play ball in the International I did.

Mr. Voorhis: If you did not, what happened?

Mr. Lovestone: Then in my case concretely, I would be put out of business, which I was.

Mr. Mason: He would have to give up his membership and affiliation and so forth if he did not obey orders.

Mr. Starnes: To make a long story short, in Communism your first loyalty, of course, was to the International, the International of the Soviet government, and the head of the Soviet government made the policies and therefore the head of the Soviet government could recall you.

Mr. Lovestone: Our first loyalty was to the Communist International, as dominated by the dominating head of the Communist Party.

Mr. Matthews: To make this more concrete, do you not know that on more than one occasion, the Comintern has recalled to Russia citizens of other countries and shot them?

Mr. Lovestone: Well –

Mr. Matthews: Let me ask you specifically about Hans Neimeyer [Heinz Neumann?]. You knew him, did you not?

Mr. Lovestone: Very well.

Mr. Matthews: As a matter of fact you once gave me a letter of introduction to him.

Mr. Lovestone: I had forgotten that.

Mr. Matthews: Do you know that Hans Neimeyer was the German leader of the Communist Party?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes.

Mr. Matthews: And that he was recalled to Moscow and shot.

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, he among others.

Mr. Matthews: Do you know that practically the entire leadership of the Polish Communist Party was recalled to Moscow and shot?

Mr. Lovestone: The press reports reveal that.

Mr. Matthews: So that it is not just a matter of agreeing to go along or getting out of the Comintern and going into some other line of business.

Mr. Lovestone: Well, let me say this: in those days the shooting practice and process was not as extensive as today. What it would have meant for me probably would have been sort of a living tomb, of course created with the tempo of the first Five-Year Plan, which was quite some tempo for those who run up against it. It would have meant being ostracised, it would have meant being isolated from my country and my comrades and friends of the labor movement in which I was brought up. It might have meant that I could take a trip on the Volga and there would be an accident on the boat.

Mr. Matthews: Were threats ever made against you?

Mr. Lovestone: Stalin himself said: 'You had better watch out; you know what happened to Trotsky and Zinoviev'. In fact, I might say when I was in Moscow, particularly after everybody was allowed to leave and I was not, I had the feeling of being in a locked trunk. You can imagine yourself being put in a trunk, and the last sound of life you hear from the outside is the snapping of the lock.

Mr. Matthews: On page 5 of Stalin's speech of 12 May [1929], I see that he reminds you: 'You know, comrades, what happened to Trotsky and Zinoviev'.

Mr. Lovestone: Oh, he reminded us a little more crudely than that stenogram would indicate, much more so.

Mr. Matthews: In what way?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, the last talk I had with Stalin before leaving was a sort of attempt to subject me to peasant-generosity of a very simple kind. And a very questionable one. Then the shaking of a fist and a threat. A warning that I had better watch out what I did. For example, at the last moment, the very last moment I had with Stalin, it was quite painfully impressed upon me. I told Mr. Stalin that I was determined to leave Russia and go back home, and I was not going to take any responsibility for the new line forced on the American Communist Party. Well, he rose to his feet, quite erect, banged his fist on the desk and said: 'Well, there is one request I want to make of you. When you go back to America see that your friends do not commit any stupidities', and he looked at me quite strongly.

It took a moment or two to get what he was driving at, and then I answered him: 'Comrade Stalin, my friends, even I can prevent their committing stupidities; and your friends, not even you can prevent them'.

When he got that answer he banged on the desk, turned around and slammed the door. Then I waited until I was escorted to the outside. That was my last and final contact with Mr. Stalin.

Mr. Matthews: You made reference, Mr. Lovestone, to the 'enlightenment campaign' as the predecessor of the liquidation technique. Will you please describe what happened after you returned to the United States in this enlightenment campaign?

Mr. Lovestone: I returned to the United States, and in three days, without a trial, without a call from the committee for hearing, I read a political decree, my tombstone as an official Communist in the form of a declaration of expulsion, without a trial or a hearing. Then that declaration was taken to every branch of the organization, and if you consult the files of the *Daily Worker*, which in those months contained practically nothing else except Russian holiday declarations and American Party funeral declarations, you will find what the enlightenment campaign was.

Mr. Voorhis: And did they get control of the new Executive Committee then?

Mr. Lovestone: You mean the National Executive Committee?

Mr. Voorhis: Yes.

Mr. Lovestone: First of all, before I was allowed to come back and before others were allowed to come back, there was a vicious campaign of misrepresentation here. Secondly, a number of our second-line people were sort of pushed into the first line for the moment and in this way they changed their political position – that, not their minds. I draw that distinction very heavily. Thirdly, a lot of them were terrorised. Fourthly, I reaped a harvest of my own sowing. I was largely responsible for that mechanical concept of loyalty to the Communist International, and it came home to roost with its claws in my eyes.

Mr. Matthews: Was there discussion in these branch meetings? I mean what actually could be called discussion of these issues?

Mr. Lovestone: I hope I make myself understandable to the committee. There is discussion and discussion. The only type of discussion in the Communist Party that persisted, beginning with our expulsion, and since our expulsion, is the following: revelation from above, dissemination of orders from below. It was revealed to the membership meeting that this, and this, is the decision. The only thing debatable was how to get the maximum effectiveness in carrying out that decision – not whether that should be the decision but how to carry out the decision. There was a revelation from the man above and they could not change that. It would be easier to get away with violating the Ten Commandments all at once than in violating a Party order.

Mr. Matthews: I would like to ask you this question: did you not know better than to go to Moscow?

Mr. Lovestone: That is again quite embarrassing and unpleasant question, but I will tell you quite frankly I was not brought up that way. I was brought up in school, college, athletics, sports, to believe that if anybody wanted to fight me, and he wanted to fight on his own ground, I would say: 'Sure, let's go fight it out'. And I went over there. Besides that, I was so sure that we had such an overwhelming majority, which hitherto had been sacred in the Communist International, that they would not change it. Besides that, I had an illusion in which I was wrong – that I could change them, or convince them, over there,

not to declare war on us; and I had the further illusion that when I came back I could mobilise an organization to beat them – to defeat them. I felt, out of loyalty and out of devotion to the Communist International, that when I got an order to go there I had to go there, and it was in strict obedience that I brought myself over to Moscow.

Mr. Matthews: When Mr. Browder, Mr. Foster and others still in the leadership of the Communist Party were on the stand they testified that Stalin has never sent instructions to the American Communist Party, instructions to be obeyed implicitly; is that true, Mr. Lovestone?

Mr. Lovestone: That is not true. Stalin, except on two occasions, never sent signed instructions to the American Communist Party, but on two decisive occasions he did send them in writing. The first one was when we had our [sixth] Convention [March 1929]. Stalin, for the first time in his life, intervened personally and directly and sent a cable to the Convention, in that cable he sent us what we call flowers – praise-compliments. We were always suspicious of those. We said: ‘Flowers for those who are about to die’. Then there was the heart of that instruction, which was that I was no longer to be General Secretary of the Party, that I was to be taken away by the Communist International for very important work. That cable came up for consideration by the delegates, and by a vote of – I do not know if you have Molotov’s speech there, he mentioned it – by a vote of 95 to something, Stalin’s cable was tabled.

Mr. Matthews: It was 95 to nine.

Mr. Lovestone: 95 to nine. The cable was tabled, which meant the American way of putting it in the wastebasket. Well, that was an affront which Stalin never got before and for which we had to pay.

The second time the direct intervention was indicated in the speech that you have just introduced in the record.

Except for those two occasions I think Browder and Foster told the truth. But actually it did not work that way. It was not necessary. Suppose somebody had a chat with Stalin, and Stalin said: ‘I think you ought to do this’. Well, not only a thought, but a hint, dropped by Stalin became Party dictum, Party law. That is the way the machinery worked at that time. And while I cannot speak in any detailed sense since my expulsion, the evidence in the sense of results would indicate it has become infinitely worse since 1929.

Mr. Mason: This cablegram to the Convention was in 1929?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, March 1929.

Mr. Matthews: When the Executive Committee of the Communist International reached its decision on the American question, were you ordered to endorse that decision?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, sir, do I have to answer yes or no? When the decision was first made official, we were prepared, and when I say we, I mean the majority of the delegation. Mr. Gitlow said he was going back to fight, but all except Mr. Gitlow, in the majority of the delegation, had agreed to make the following statement: 'Despite the fact that we disagree with the decision, we are prepared to submit as disciplined Communists'.

That was not accepted by the Communist International, although officially that was the formal practice and procedure in the International.

For a number of weeks I was kept in Moscow negotiating for a type of statement from me that would satisfy them. They wanted from me especially, since I was Secretary, a type of statement that they could use in this country so that the resistance to the line of the Communist International would be broken.

At one meeting of the Secretariat of the Communist International in early June 1929, there occurred an incident which I have not forgotten, which illustrates the essence of Stalin's totalitarianism. A delegate, I do not know his name – he was an Italian – a member of the Secretariat, made a motion that I should be instructed to endorse the new policy of the Comintern in America. I knew I was on the spot, but I had a little experience with being on the spot, and after a few minutes I got up and made a declaration that I was prepared to issue the following statement: 'Under instructions of the Secretariat of the Communist International, I hereby endorse the new decision'.

My proposal was almost accepted. Then Molotov intervened and said: 'No, we cannot accept that, because the first part of it would indict us for resorting to questionable practices', and that proposal was rejected. When they tried to get me to endorse it in their own official, formal way, I refused. That was the end.

...

Mr. Matthews: Now, Mr. Lovestone, you have already stated that there were three stages in your relationship to these issues which arose at the Comintern. Will you reiterate those?

Mr. Lovestone: The first stage was the period when the Russians were able to lead through the prestige gained for them –

Mr. Matthews: I am referring to your own attitude. You spoke of first attempting to fight.

Mr. Lovestone: Oh, I see what you mean. I am sorry, I misunderstood you. Well, we had for several years before the split in 1929 entertained doubts as to our relations with Moscow. We were trying to become much more independent at that time – politically, financially, every way. By 1925 we had entertained some doubts, but they were not very vigorous on my part. But they were much more vigorous on the part of Mr. Ruthenberg, who was then General Secretary. I was at that time much more pro-Moscow. For example, while we were with the Communist Party inside, we went along for a while with the spirit of dual unionism, and we participated in the attempt to wreck the International Ladies Garment Workers Union – that is, to capture it. As I said, we failed at that time primarily because of the ability of the leadership of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, headed by people like [Sidney] Hillman, [David] Dubinsky, and others.

We went along with the spirit of dual unionism for a while, helping to build the National Miners' Union, Textile Union, and so on. We tried to play the game and see how it worked. On the basis of a few months' experience with it we became convinced opponents of this new line. Then we were expelled and we still had hopes for the Communist Party and the Communist International, and we tried to reform it from the outside.

Mr. Matthews: That was for a period of about seven years, as you have stated?

Mr. Lovestone: That was from 1929 to 1936, about seven years, yes. In that time we criticised the Communist Party very vigorously. I might say we have not criticised it with rancour or filth or bitterness comparable to what was heaped upon us, but we always criticised it saying that, if the Communist Party would reestablish the democratic system of leadership and if the International would establish a genuine collective leadership, we would be prepared to come back and be disciplined people. But by 1936 the Communist International had become so obviously and crassly the agent of the Russian foreign policy, and the leadership had become so sterile and the puppet system had become so hopelessly universal, that we felt there was no possibility of reforming it from within or without, and we came to the natural evolution of the Communist

International and Stalin, an evolution which we have emphasised in our press time and time again.

Mr. Voorhis: That was by what year?

Mr. Lovestone: That was 1936.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lovestone, I have read in the press there was a raid on your home, in which certain papers were taken. Will you please give an account, as you know it, of that raid – when it occurred and who was responsible for it, and who participated in it, if you know?

Mr. Lovestone: In July 1938, in the height of the fight against Communist Party domination of the United Automobile Workers, CIO, an attempt was made to get me. The attempt was made on a Sunday, because generally I would be staying home on Sundays to work, but that Sunday I happened not to be at home. I was not gotten, but my home was rifled and confidential documents of all sorts and sundry were stolen. I immediately knew that that could be performed by only one of two agencies, either the Gestapo, because of my vigorous fight against the Nazis, and because of my visiting Germany and organizing the underground revolutionary movements in Germany after Hitler took power, or by the GPU.

I must confess I was wrong in thinking it more likely the Gestapo, because a couple of weeks after that, *The Daily Worker* came out with full photostatic copies of quite a number of documents rifled from my home – documents pertaining to the struggle against Communist Party manipulation and domination of the United Automobile Workers. When I saw that I knew it was a GPU job. Through our own channels we began to investigate and we learned that it was a GPU job, directed by a GPU agent in this country by the name of Mr. Leon Josephson. I issued a statement to the press, and notified the New York police authorities and tried to press the case, but since the GPU robbers were not caught on the spot, nothing very much was done by the New York authorities, and at this time, while I am not minus my life, I am minus my papers.

Mr. Voorhis: This took place in New York?

Mr. Lovestone: In New York City, in my home, which was not known to more than four or five people – absolutely confidential. And I might say I had to live in this manner because I had received, particularly in 1937 and 1938, when the Russian purges became frequent, quite a number of threats against my life –

that I would be gotten, that I would be bumped off. I took care at least to live so that the Stalinists would not know where, but apparently I was more careless than careful and they got what they wanted, at least in part.

Mr. Matthews: Did you have substantial reasons for thinking Mr. Leon Josephson had something to do with this?

Mr. Lovestone: Our information was that it was organized by a GPU group, headed by a certain Mr. Leon Josephson. I have never met him; I do not know who he is.

Mr. Matthews: I was just wondering how you –

Mr. Lovestone: It was just through our connection with friends and people inside the Communist Party that we got this information. In fact, my attorneys received telephonic information along the same lines.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lovestone, I would like to ask you some questions about money from Moscow, which is a subject which has been testified to by numerous witnesses before this committee. I would like to ask you if you personally ever received any money in or from Moscow for the use of the Communist Party in the United States. Can you answer that ‘yes’ or ‘no’?

Mr. Lovestone: No. I would like to answer this not by a ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

Mr. Matthews: Yes.

Mr. Lovestone: I have received, in my capacity as Secretary of the Communist Party in this country, contributions from the Communist International, money contributions. What is more, I would like the committee to know our attitude toward receiving contributions. We had a general theory at that time – and, by the way, I think it is quite sound on that issue today – that it is not wrong for the stronger organization to help the weaker one. As a matter of fact, I can refer you to authoritative, competent histories of the American Revolution, which indicate that the American revolutionists had received from France, Spain and Holland close to twenty-six million francs in order to help put over the revolution against King George. We said it was perfectly all right for the revolutionists to take that money, provided they did not allow Spanish monarchists or Dutch monarchists to dominate their political line in the United States. For instance, we know that quite a lot of money goes to China through the medium

of missionary organizations. We say that is perfectly all right, provided these missionary organizations do not attempt to dominate the political line of the Chinese government or the Chinese people. The issue that we had with the Stalin regime was that they attempted, through the support they gave us, to dominate and determine and dictate our political line. In other words, I am not here objecting to their donations, or denouncing the receipt of support by us as the weaker organization from the stronger, I am denouncing – and this was the point in our break – the attempt to utilise that financial support for determining or influencing our political principles in the United States.

I might say that one of the points of suspicion against us was as to our loyalty, so that as far back as 1926 and 1927 we had already begun to not only not to ask for more funds, but to reduce the subsidy from the Comintern, and on a number of occasions Stalin very diplomatically alluded to that. It was a bit of Stalin diplomacy and I knew what it was. It was the first offer of a sort of mutual-assistance pact which I was not ready to sign. By 1928 we practically were sending over, in one form or another, to the Comintern almost as much as they sent to us.

Mr. Matthews: On that point, Mr. Browder testified here that the American Communist Party did not pay dues to the Communist International. Is that what you are referring to now?

Mr. Lovestone: I am not referring to his testimony, I am referring to my own experience. We did pay dues to the Communist International, just as every party had to pay dues to the Communist International, and when we were not in a position to pay the dues, because we did not have the money, it was reduced from our subsidy. So we paid dues regularly. I do not know what is the actual relationship between Mr. Browder and Mr. Stalin. Perhaps it is only a one-way traffic. I think in general we might say that the relationship wanted by the Russians with us then and now was a sort of cash-and-carry arrangement – they would give the cash and we would have to carry out. We had some objections to the cash and we had lots of objections to carrying out.

Mr. Starnes: How much annual subsidy were they giving you?

Mr. Lovestone: There are a lot of romantic figures about that. It is not true that we received very large sums. I might say about twenty-five thousand dollars a year as general; twenty to twenty-five thousand a year was the average in 1926, 1927 and 1928, and there were occasions for special donations, special

campaigns, and sometimes there would be a good-sized contribution for a special campaign. But in general it was no more than about twenty to twenty-five thousand dollars a year.

Mr. Matthews: That was the regular subsidy on average, but then often times large sums of money would come in for a particular program?

Mr. Lovestone: That is correct.

Mr. Mason: What was your membership at that time when you were getting twenty to twenty-five thousand dollars?

Mr. Lovestone: About eighteen thousand.

Mr. Mason: At a dollar a year?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, but they were dues-paying disciplined members, not paper figures.

Mr. Matthews: In addition to the money received from the Comintern, which I think is what you are speaking about?

Mr. Lovestone: That is right.

Mr. Matthews: Were there funds which came through the channels of the Profintern apart from the Comintern's money?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, but I could not possibly tell you what those were because the Profintern took extraordinarily good care that I should not know. They were sent directly to Foster and that money was used almost consistently for financing the factional fight, artificially and unnaturally in this country, under the direction of Lozovsky.

Mr. Matthews: Now, will you please make as clear and definite a statement as you can, Mr. Lovestone, about the way in which funds were transmitted from Moscow to the United States, according to your own personal knowledge.

Mr. Lovestone: To my own knowledge, I will say, first of all, the way they were not. They were not given to us by Amtorg [Trading Corporation] or any Russian agency. We had absolutely nothing at all to do with them. In general, the funds

were brought by delegates coming back from Moscow. I occasionally brought some funds with me, others did the same.

Mr. Matthews: Do you know whether or not Mr. Gitlow ever brought funds back from Moscow?

Mr. Lovestone: To the best of my recollection, he did.

Mr. Matthews: He so testified here.

Mr. Lovestone: I recall that from the press accounts of the testimony. That was true.

Mr. Matthews: What body in the Communist International has authority for the allocation of funds to the national parties?

Mr. Lovestone: That was the budget commission, headed by [Osip] Piatnitsky.

Mr. Matthews: Who was he?

Mr. Lovestone: I can only give you my opinion of him. He is an old Russian comrade. He was one of the first secretaries of the Communist International.

Mr. Matthews: Was he the author of the 21 points? [21 conditions of affiliation to the Communist International]

Mr. Lovestone: No. He was one of the oldest – he was, I might say, ‘is’ would be inaccurate, because I am in no position to say whether he is alive or dead at this moment. I think he has been liquidated. However, he was one of the leaders of the Russian movement.

Mr. Matthews: Were you on the budget commission of the Communist International?

Mr. Lovestone: I was for a while on the budget commission.

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After Recess.

The committee reassembled in the caucus room, House Office Building, at 1:15 pm. Hon. Joe Starnes, presiding.

Mr. Starnes: The Committee will resume its hearings.

(The witness was previously duly sworn.)

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lovestone, before the recess you were testifying concerning money from the Communist International and the Profintern. In your own experience in administering the affairs of the Communist Party in the United States, you estimated, I believe, that receipts in cash from the Comintern were around twenty-five thousand dollars a year?

Mr. Lovestone: That is for normal general Party work.

Mr. Matthews: Now, based upon your experience in the cost of administering the Communist Party during the period of your secretaryship, would you be willing to make an estimate of the subsidy required since your secretaryship in order to carry on the activities of the Communist Party as you have observed them?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, first of all I would say that the Stalinists never could lick us in this country unless they had either a rich uncle or several hundred thousand Polacks⁵ digging gold for them, which means a very heavy subsidy from somewhere and the only place, from my experience, that it could come from was from Moscow. Generally I would say, in order to beat us, let alone [to make possible] an extensive diversification of their work, they would have to get somehow, somewhere, money running into six or seven figures.

Mr. Matthews: Annually?

Mr. Lovestone: Oh, yes, sir. It cost them that to operate on the basis of their own admitted budget. Now, they get it from dues, they get it from donations, they can get it from Hollywood – that is a nice place in more ways than one – but I think that the kulaks are the backbone of their support.

Mr. Matthews: By that, you mean the literal kulaks in Russia that are working, mining gold for the American Communist Party?

5 *Editors' note* – It would seem that this is a transcription error, and that Lovestone actually said 'kulaks'.

Mr. Lovestone: I mean the kulaks who were driven off of their land, whose lands were collectivised, and who were sent to dig in the gold mines of Siberia, or wherever gold is found.

Mr. Matthews: Now, by six or seven figures, you mean between one hundred thousand and one million dollars?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, there is great latitude there.

Mr. Matthews: Would it be your estimate – at any rate, on the basis of your own experience, would you be qualified to make some estimate of the cost of conducting the present operations of the Communist Party?

Mr. Lovestone: Oh, yes. You see, I understand Mr. Browder testified that *The Daily Worker* has a paid circulation of fifty thousand. I do not know whether he testified how many they printed, but assuming that his figures are correct – and I do not want to call Mr. Browder a liar – they could not possibly finance a paper without a huge deficit, if they had a paid circulation of only fifty thousand for the average of a year.

Mr. Matthews: In your own writing you have used the expression ‘the degeneration of the Communist International’, and at other times you have spoken of the ‘running-sore of the Comintern’, and later on of the ‘cancer of the Comintern’. Would you please be more explicit as to what you mean by those phrases?

Mr. Lovestone: When I became a Communist and I enlisted in the movement to establish an international socialist society, I did so in the best of faith, and the very first days of the International... I think were dedicated in thought and action to this objective. Later on, because of the factors that I mentioned and other factors, the Communist International degenerated into an agency of the dominant Russian faction and became a nest of intrigue, a swamp of factional maneuvers – that is what I meant by degeneration. I used the term and wrote at one time of the ‘running-sore’, because I refer to the obligations, direction and financing of the faction fight in the American Communist Party by Lozovsky.

When I came to Moscow they asked me whether I used the term ‘running-sore’. They did that with the hope that I would apologise for it. I confessed I was wrong and changed it to ‘cancer’ instead of ‘running-sore’.

Well, I think my confession was in order and my analysis was sound. It became a cancer, in the most incurable sense of the word. You could not cure it by freezing and you could not cure it by surgery, because the surgeons continually cut out the healthy flesh and left the diseased tissue.

Mr. Matthews: Now, you have testified –

Mr. Starnes: Would you call it a malignant or benign cancer?

Mr. Lovestone: I would surely not use ‘benign’ under these circumstances. I would call it an extraordinarily malignant cancer.

Mr. Starnes: Very well.

Mr. Matthews: You have testified that the factional strife inside of the Russian Communist Party has been reflected in the national parties outside of the Soviet Union. Is it true that a period was reached in the Soviet Union when the Party apparatus destroyed, to all intents and purposes, the trade unions of the Soviet Union?

Mr. Lovestone: If you examine the position of the Russian trade unions up to the beginning of the Revolution, with the position they occupy today, you will inevitably arrive, unless you are afraid of being purged, at the conclusion that the vitality, the life, of the Russian trade-union movement has been taken away.

In the beginning, I might say Lenin time and time again advocated trade unions so as to divide the power, in order to have discussion, and to curb the bureaucrats. That policy was in the beginning, as put forward by [Mikhail] Tomsy. I was for that policy, and one of the reasons for Tomsy’s being ‘suicided’ – I did not say he committed suicide, I said he was ‘suicided’ – [was] because he was zealously trying to preserve some vestige of *bona fide* character and independence for the Russian trade unions.

Today they are state agencies, dominated by the Stalinist police absolutely.

Mr. Matthews: In other words, they have no character, you mean to say of the trade unions?

Mr. Lovestone: They are not trade unions in the sense of the word used by us in this country or in England, and they are no longer trade unions in the sense of their functioning right after the Revolution.

Mr. Matthews: Now, was it somewhat coincidental with the destruction of the real character of the trade unions in Russia that you received instructions from Moscow to rule or ruin trade unions in America?

Mr. Lovestone: That is a very interesting question. You see, in Russia the trade unions increasingly became part of the state apparatus, the state apparatus there being a Soviet state. The Russian Communist Party, the International, was at that time transferring the mechanics, all tactics, from Russia to the other countries, and the reasoning was something along this line: well, if in Russia we have trade unions, they are part of the Soviet state; in the capitalist countries we have trade unions, therefore they are part of those states. Those are capitalist states, which we must destroy. Obviously, since we must destroy the capitalist states, we must destroy every part of that capitalist state. The union is a part of the capitalist state and we must destroy the unions, and since they were closest to the Communist Party, as labor organizations, they would be the first ones in practice, under the theory of social fascism, to be destroyed. It was a straight mechanical transfer of the tactics from Russia to this country.

Mr. Matthews: Will you please, in a few words, elaborate on the principal Party reasons for destroying the International Ladies Garment Workers Union between 1925 and 1926?

Mr. Lovestone: First, let me say that I shared to quite an extent the guilt for that campaign. I regret it, as I learned from experience in other work, though I by no means am responsible for the policy.

We began to work on the ILGWU to capture it. In 1925 we almost did, but as I said before, we were outmaneuvered. Then we were criticised by Lozovsky for failing to capture it in 1925. By that time we were still working as a destructive force in the ILGWU, gradually shifting the line to the ultra-Left, preceded by an open split movement, culminating in the organization of a new Needle Trades Workers International Union, dominated by the Communist Party as a dual union to the ILGWU.

Well, we tried in every way to win control and then to win away the membership from [Morris] Sigman and [Eugene] Lezinsky. I must say this, I had no part in this, but it was directly inspired by Lozovsky. We resorted to tactics of this sort: for example, the Communist Party would denounce the International Ladies Garment Workers Union for giving up week-work and accepting piecework. While denouncing that – and denunciations were made on the one hand – the employers were offered, for that same so-called revolutionary union,

piece-work in order to get the contract away from the *bona fide* AF of L union. That was part of the practice pursued under direct orders from Lozovsky.

Mr. Matthews: Now, if I understand what you have just said, you mean that this was at least one instance where the Communist-controlled union offered terms more satisfactory to the employers for the purpose of undermining the influence and prestige of the American Federation of Labor union.

Mr. Lovestone: Yes.

Mr. Matthews: Were there any other instances in which the Communist-controlled union underbid the American Federation of Labor union for the purpose of destroying the American Federation of Labor unions?

Mr. Lovestone: There were quite a number. I do not remember them all. I recall just one which is a rather flagrant case. We conducted a campaign against John L. Lewis because he was surrendering the wage scale of the Jacksonville agreement. We did not get very far, some thought. I thought we did. It is a matter of opinion. But when we were at Moscow at the [sixth] World Congress of the Communist International, in the summer of 1928, we were advised to continue our campaign against Lewis for dropping the wage scale laid down in the Jacksonville agreement and at the same time to offer the operators, in order to get the contract away from the United Mine Workers, to offer the operators a wage scale beneath not merely the Jacksonville scale, but beneath the scale offered by Lewis. In other words, I may say in the spirit of self-criticism, this was rank duplicity.

...

Mr. Matthews: Would you say that there is a certain type of mind that is peculiarly adaptable to membership and work in the Communist Party as it operates?

Mr. Lovestone: It is the type of mind, and it is a peculiar thing that Stalinism has a greater hold on that particular type of mind than Kaiserism ever had in its most potent hours. A person can be a great scientist in his own field; he can be a great artist in his own field; he can be a great thinker in his particular field; but the moment he throws himself into that stream he is just carried along as a particle of dust would be in a powerful current. He surrenders all right to

question. He has after a while succeeded in atrophying his critical existence in the political field. I can say that frankly from experience. I have seen the germs of this begin in myself, and I am happy that I broke with it, and when I say I broke with it, I mean this particular type of mind, not the ideals of socialism, to which I adhere today more strongly than ever, because I have learned to adhere more firmly than before.

Mr. Mason: Would you say Stalinism is a fetish?

Mr. Lovestone: I would say that it is a toxin, and a fetish sometimes can amount to a toxin, in the realm of mind.

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Mr. Matthews: Now, Mr. Lovestone, I would like to have you outline very briefly, if you will, the various stages – I think there are perhaps several of them, three or four – represented in this question of domination of the American Party by the Comintern or Stalin, or whatever it was that was dominating it at the time. In the first period of that domination, what was the power of the domination or the effect which made it possible for Russian to control the American Communist Party?

Mr. Lovestone: In the first stage of the Communist International, Russia really did not control in any mechanical sense, as we speak of it today, but influenced it decisively through its prestige. You see, they had just licked the Tsar and given him a one-way ticket to somewhere. They had gotten rid of the capitalists. They had organized a workers' government. They were living a dream that we had, and naturally we looked up to them. Besides, they tended to treat us as equals, with equal respect – respecting our opinions, and we appreciated that. They were big men, and because they were big men they did not act in little or small ways, but nevertheless the Russian influence was decisive.

That ended with Lenin's departure from active line in the Communist International.

Mr. Matthews: Around 1923?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, even before, when Zinoviev came in there was a radical change at Moscow. First there was the beginning of slavishness and mechanical transference, and what I called the Byzantine court at Moscow – kowtowing to the potentates – but it was not yet worked up into a system. With this control,

a good deal of their dislike for one country or another was tied up with their factional struggles in Russia. Then that culminated in the triumph of Stalin in Russia and thereafter the triumph of Stalin in the Communist International, Stalin setting up the type of leadership that I had characterised before in the story of Caligula. The first days of Stalin domination was unquestionably the domination of the International . . . I illustrated before the trade-union question. I might give other illustrations. I do not know whether it is necessary.

All of this has culminated in total Stalinization – or what we [call] sterilization – of the Communist International . . . At the moment the Communist International is nothing but an agency to reflect the maneuvers and interests of the Soviet foreign policy. When Stalin was seeking to do business with Chamberlain, with England and France, then the Communist International followed in this country one line of policy. When the Russians switched and went into a profound and extensive partnership with Hitler, the line of policy here had to be changed to reflect that.

I might be a little more specific. For example, you gentlemen in Congress know, you recall the Bloom Bill last June or thereabouts. It was defeated by about sixty-five votes. At that time the Communist Party in this country was the most vigorous campaigner for the Bloom Bill. Why? Because it was trying to drive the United States into war against German imperialism, against the Nazi bandits. Well, since then Stalin has changed his policy. I do not think that politics nowadays makes strange bedfellows. No bedfellows could be strange enough in present-day European politics. But, Stalin and Hitler became bedfellows, and presto, *The Daily Worker* was no longer the champion of any bill like the Bloom Bill, but became the most ardent opponent of the revision of the old neutrality legislation and was for a maximum embargo. The change of policy was not dictated by concerns with the interests of the great masses of the population, of the workers and the farmers and the middle class people in this country. The change in policy was dictated by the switch in Russian foreign policy. The same Foster, the same Browder, would write that this glass (*indicating*) is made of gold on Monday, and on the temperature of the International and a change of policy, it was made of tin on Tuesday. It was not that the glass changed, but circumstances changed. The organization changed. And, orders were determined solely by the Russian foreign policy.

...

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lovestone, I wonder if you would be willing to give, from your own viewpoint, some suggestions as to how you think this kind of a movement which you have described during your testimony should be opposed,

should be fought. You have had experience in fighting on behalf and fighting against it.

Mr. Lovestone: I will first of all say that it should not and cannot be fought – you cannot fight Stalinism in this country, or elsewhere, by repression, by outlawing legislation, by declaring it a crime to be a member of it. When you do that, you supply them the most powerful sentiment, that is, blood of martyrdom.

Secondly, I think their ideas ought to be subjected to maximum sunlight. They represent a special type of character, and I am convinced, in the light of their own traditions and the light and the character of the labor movement, that if their ideas are subjected to the opening, scorching sunlight and sunshine, that they cannot flourish. I think that would be far more effective than any other measure.

Thirdly, I think in many ways the problems involved here are problems of the labor movement and they should be settled within the household, in the family of labor, by labor itself. I have had quite a bit of experience in the trade-union movement and I can say that when we succeed in defeating these things in trade unions through democratic discussion processes, we inflict upon them a far more decisive blow than any arrests or persecution might deal to them, in the eyes of some people.

Mr. Mason: May I interrupt there for just a moment? How can labor settle its problems if it enters into alliance with, as the CIO has done, these Communist leaders? They are taking the enemy right into their camp and the enemy then attacks them from within.

Mr. Lovestone: I do not desire to go into any detailed discussion of personal or leadership problems of the trade unions before the committee, and I would ask that I be excused in that respect.

Mr. Mason: All right.

Mr. Lovestone: But I will just say this: Unquestionably there have been conditions – and not naming names, and I do not want to discuss it in that light – there have been conditions where trade-union leaders made alliances with them. They thought that they could use them and then throw them out. You can take lots of things into your bosom, but sometimes you find that you have a snake in your lap, or around your bosom, and you do not get much of a chance to live. It is like riding a tiger. You do not dare stop. That has happened on occasions, and naturally it is fatal to the unions involved and fatal to the workers

in those unions, and fatal to those leaders who have a chance to render real service to labor, without doubt.

Mr. Voorhis: I would like to just say, because I think it is fair, at this point, that in contacts which I have had myself, not only with American Federation of Labor leaders, but also leaders of the CIO unions in my district, that I find a very determined spirit on the part of those people to be rid of these Communists.

Mr. Mason: That is the hopeful thing, though, that labor itself can clean out these destructive elements.

Mr. Voorhis: I agree thoroughly, but I just think, in the interest of fairness, I should say that because I think it is true.

Mr. Lovestone: I might add if and when we re-establish a united labor movement in this country, the Communist influence in unions will be reduced considerably.

Mr. Voorhis: That will probably do as much as any one thing, too.

Mr. Lovestone: They are fishing in troubled waters. I might just add one or two or three more illustrations of struggle against totalitarianism. Of course, there has to be conducted constantly a campaign against all species of totalitarianism.

Mr. Voorhis: That is right.

Mr. Lovestone: There are differences between them as there are differences between Stalin and Hitler totalitarianisms, without doubt, and one point I think labor must emphasise, it must guarantee in its own ranks the right to opinions, differences of opinion, and expressions in a democratic manner regardless of how radical the social ideas or ideals of the proponents of the certain movements may be; but no labor organization or no self-respecting institution can permit in its ranks the operation of forces that are not controlled by themselves, that are not responsible for themselves, that at best are irresponsible or whose responsibility is outside along the line of the descriptions I have given. We have to conduct our fight in that light.

Mr. Voorhis: And still less responsible to the labor organization itself.

Mr. Lovestone: Absolutely – not concerned with the labor organization itself.

Mr. Matthews: Would you say that also applies to a state – that a state cannot tolerate intervention through subterfuge or any other method of a foreign government in its internal affairs?

Mr. Lovestone: You put me in an embarrassing position. I am not a state. If I were a state, I assure you I could take care of it.

Mr. Matthews: I take it that that agrees with the labor principles you have set forth?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, I take it that I am not going to do the legislating, and I can understand very well how any self-respecting institution, whether it be a state or any other organization, would say, "Look here. I want to know something about you, if you are going to ask something from me, particularly if you are going to ask my head." That I could see as reasonable; but I think the way to meet that is the way I suggested. Anyway, that is my opinion. I may be wrong.

Mr. Matthews: I am referring to such matters as intervention in internal affairs of the country through the agency of espionage.

Mr. Lovestone: I absolutely agree with that, without question, unqualifiedly so.

Mr. Matthews: The state must take measures to protect itself against espionage?

Mr. Lovestone: I am opposed to any faction of any labor movement being an appendage of any government. I would be opposed to the American Federation of Labor or the CIO being appendages to the American government. That would destroy their vitality, make government unions a basis of Fascism, and I would be opposed to the American Federation of Labor and the Communist Party or any other organization being an appendage of the Federal government, or of the Nazi, or Soviet, or British, or any government. It must be a movement growing out of the conditions in the country representing the will or opinion of the people in the country.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lovestone, when Mr. Browder was on the stand here he stated that the statutes of the Communist International published in a pamphlet which was introduced here in the record as an exhibit, are not in any formal sense, at least, enforced, or considered enforceable or even applicable to the conduct of the American Communist Party. What are the facts on that as you understand them?

Mr. Lovestone: There are two points involved here. First, the 21 points, the foundation articles of the Communist International, have been dead for quite some time. They have never been formally repudiated, but they have been replaced.

On the other hand, there are these statutes of organization – that is, statutes of the Communist International. There is something in what Browder says. They must be applied. They may not be applied when the Russians are involved, but when it comes to the others, they are very applicable. I know they were applied very practically and Stalin wants them applied in relation to us. But woe be unto anybody who tries not to apply them when the Russians want them applied.

Mr. Matthews: I believe in the case of the 21 points, *The Daily Worker* asserted you had been guilty of violating the 21 points, and that has been made a part of the record of the hearings, so that they were not dead in 1929.

Mr. Lovestone: No, they have not been officially proclaimed as dead. They can always be brought back to life when necessary. It is a form of freezing to preserve life.

Mr. Matthews: Now, outlining the various periods through which the Communist International has passed, with particular reference to changing strategies, changing world outlook, or what not, would you say the present International has now definitely entered the phase of red imperialism?

Mr. Lovestone: Oh, I would characterise it and explain it in the following way: it is not red imperialism, it is yellow imperialism. There is nothing red about the attack on Finland. There is quite a little yellow – but you have got to view it from the point of evolution. Now, as to the point of evolution, the Communist International in its first stages really stood for world revolution and in an idealistic and practical sense. We at that time felt that the British Empire was pretty much smashed up and, with the British Empire smashed up, the heart of world capitalism was finished. Well, we miscalculated. I say we – I take as much responsibility as anyone else could take for it, and I contributed my might toward the theory which later proved to be false.

When we saw it was false, we broke with the ultra-Leftists in the infantile days of communism and turned to a period say from 1921 to 1928 of what I would consider in general a sound, practical approach based on reality. By 1928 there was a change for the reasons I have given before and there was another swing to what we then called ultra-leftism – adventurous radicalism, irresponsible radicalism divorced from reality.

That lasted from about the end of 1928 or say 1929 to the seventh World Congress [of the Comintern] of 1935. In that period Roosevelt was called the Fascist, but beginning with 1935 down to the Stalin-Hitler pact, there was what we called the period of ultra-Rightism, the extremest and most rancid type of opportunism. You could not distinguish a Communist Party member from a devout Catholic who took an oath against Communism every morning, because it was very common for them to take oaths against Communism, as long as it advanced Russian foreign policy, and such things were done.

With the Stalin-Hitler pact coming into full bloom, the weed in its present shape and growth, the Communist International has ceased to be in the slightest way either Communist or international, or an international organization. Today I would characterise it as an agency of the Stalin-Hitler bloc – not merely Stalin, but Stalin-Hitler bloc. That is quite a change, and quite an advance in degeneration.

Mr. Matthews: Now, Mr. Lovestone, there is really not anything absolutely new in this attack of the Soviet Union on Finland or in the Stalin-Hitler alliance, or any other form of duplicity in which we find the Russian government now engaged, is there?

Mr. Lovestone: It is not new, was not new to us. We expected it about a year ago, but it is not at all tied up with any of the ideals that animated the other revolution.

Mr. Matthews: Let me give an illustration of what I have in mind in saying that there is not anything absolutely new. It is not true that the Red Army actually invaded and conquered the state of Georgia when the overwhelming majority of the population of that country was anti-Communist or Menshevik in its political life?

Mr. Lovestone: I do not associate myself with that opinion. I do not think so. The state of Georgia was an integral part of Russia. The state of Georgia was being used to buy British imperialists as a basis from which to assault Russia and steal its oil, and the Russians were fully justified in driving out the British from there. If somebody were to try to move into Texas, I am sure Congressman Dies would lead an army to chase them out, and I think Lenin was perfectly correct in driving the British into the sea and elsewhere, where they never could return.

On the other hand I come back to the policy with regard to Finland. If the Russians wanted to continue the war at that time, they certainly could have

mastered Finland at one time or another. They did not want to, because Finland never was really an integral part of Russia. Even under the Tsar they had tremendous possibilities for independence; they were not merely a grand duchy – and Lenin was as much responsible and the Russians at that time were as much responsible as any power could be for Finland being given independence.

Now, what is Stalin doing today? The very opposite. The vulnerability of Leningrad or sections around Leningrad was always there, and yet the Russians for a period of time were able to be friends with Finland and were not concerned about the vulnerability of Leningrad, but what Stalin wants is to sustain and prolong his bureaucratic Stalin hold on the Russian people and that explains the establishment of the protectorates over Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It is a sort of mutual-assistance pact such as each of us has when we have a turkey for Thanksgiving. I help the turkey and the turkey helps me, and so on down the line.

That was not the policy of the Russians in the beginning, and I would say that Stalin made a major and disastrous contribution here to the ideals of the Russian Revolution.

Mr. Matthews: Now, I will not enter into any debate with you on the subject of Georgia. Let us see if we can find another illustration. You know of the Treaty of Rapallo between Germany and Russia, I believe in 1922?

Mr. Lovestone: That is right.

Mr. Matthews: I think perhaps you know by this time there was a secret clause in the Treaty of Rapallo whereby the Russian government agreed to have operated on Russian territory munitions plants for the express purpose of providing Germany with munitions in order to enable Germany to circumvent the Treaty of Versailles.

Mr. Lovestone: I think so.

Mr. Matthews: You are acquainted with that?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes.

Mr. Matthews: And is it also true that in the Treaty of Rapallo, which enabled the Reichswehr to get munitions from Soviet territory, that the Reichswehr at that time, that particular period, was using those munitions to a considerable extent in shooting down the representatives of the Communists in Germany?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, I think you have simplified the picture too much. Let me express my opinion. I think in general it was quite sound for the Russians, as an independent state and [with] whose policies we on the outside should not seek to interfere, just as they should not seek to interfere in ours, to sign a treaty of friendship with Germany so as to make it harder for France and England to invade Russia, because Germany would not let them. Now, at the same time there is a certain contradiction involved here, when they signed such a treaty with Germany, they signed with the powers that be in Germany. Those powers that be, in a certain way, are interested in suppressing their own labor movement. That cannot be helped.

The test must come in this sense: in those days the Russians were compelled to sign for one reason or another treaties with capitalist countries. They did not dictate, as a result of that, the policies of the labor movement in that country with which they signed the treaty. While they signed the Treaty of Rapallo, they did not try to weaken the revolutionary character of the German labor movement.

On the other hand, Stalin came in when he signed his pact with the French government. The first thing that was done was the issuance of an order to the Communist Party of France to give up all militancy, to give up all effective concern for the workers in France. The Communist Party in France became an agency to carry out the pact between the French government and the Soviet government. That is wrong. The Russians have a right to make their treaties. We do not want to interfere with them, and let them not interfere with international labor unions.

Mr. Starnes: Let us get down to the question, if we can, of Dr. Matthews, of whether there are any espionage activities on the part of the Soviet government and the Soviet Communist Party in the United States.

Mr. Matthews: Would you please give us the benefit of your information, Mr. Lovestone, on the question of the relationship of the Communist Party of the United States to the GPU?

Lovestone: Well, the relationship is of two sorts. It would be a mistake to say that every Communist Party member is a GPU member, and also be a mistake to say that at all time the Communist Party as such is cooperating with agencies of the GPU. On the other hand, there was some limited cooperation at one time or another with the GPU agents, but far more important is this, that the Communist parties of the various countries have been transformed as such into agencies that play the role of a GPU for the Soviets. Their psychology

is that. Their spirit and mind is that. Their attitude is that. It is not that they are GPU agents on the payroll or making daily reports. It is not that simple, mechanically, but in a psychological sense that is very true. I might emphasise here that it is not logical, but it is also psychological, and the psychology of the Communist Party leadership today is a police psychology. It is in this case GPU psychology.

Mr. Mason: Which makes very effective agents in troublesome times to get the information necessary to do certain things.

Mr. Lovestone: It makes it a very effective agent at all times for knowledge or influence or tarnishing or monkeying with public opinion.

Mr. Starnes: That psychological factor would lead, then, any member of the Communist Party to impart any information that he had that would be of value to the Soviet government.

Mr. Lovestone: It is not that he sits down and takes notes.

Mr. Starnes: I understand that.

Mr. Lovestone: But the attitude.

Mr. Starnes: The attitude does.

Mr. Lovestone: The state of mind.

Mr. Starnes: And the state of mind which leads him to a sense of loyalty to the Soviet government rather than a sense of loyalty to this government.

Mr. Lovestone: It is not a question of loyalty, it is a question of animal-habit, pure animal-habit. You just start swinging your arms when you walk, and that is the way it is.

Mr. Starnes: Regardless of what line of endeavour this Communist is in, so long as he had that attitude or state of mind he could be used, either wittingly or unwittingly, as an agent for espionage activities.

Mr. Lovestone: In effect, yes.

Mr. Matthews: And does your experience, Mr. Lovestone, in GPU psychology indicate that it even overflows the boundaries of actual Party membership and includes some sympathisers who become quite enthusiastic about the Party?

Mr. Lovestone: It affects every special operation of the Communist Party, whether it would be a sympathetic organization or an organization that they worked in that is really hostile to them. It is unavoidable.

Mr. Matthews: Will you give us some of the types of activities involved in that character of the Communist Party which you describe as one of the GPU mental or GPU psychological?

Mr. Lovestone: That psychology has largely developed since our expulsion and resistance on our part to it entailed our expulsion, but I would say the primary point would be the judging of the good of all problems and penalties in the country, not from the viewpoint of conditions and reality of the land, but from the viewpoint of the interest and actual manipulations or adorations or adulations on the other side. You have your feet in this country, but your head and your heart are outside.

Mr. Starnes: That is right.

Mr. Lovestone: That is it in reality.

Mr. Starnes: Therefore, anyone who subscribes to the tenets of the Party and who had this police mentality, as you describe it, who has his feet here but his head and heart over there, if he were a worker in a munitions plant or in a navy yard, or were employed as a worker in any other plant, or if he were connected with a state or the Federal government and by virtue of his employment, either private or public, information vital to the welfare and safety of this country came to his possession, that type of mentality and that state of mind which he has would lead him to furnish that information to the Soviet government.

Mr. Lovestone: Consciously or unconsciously, or subconsciously, he would make good material for it.

Mr. Starnes: Yes.

Mr. Lovestone: Not necessarily in every individual sense. That would be wrong to say that. But, he would make very good material for that.

Mr. Starnes: And generally speaking it would be true.

Mr. Lovestone: That is the type as it would tend to run.

Mr. Starnes: All right, proceed.

Mr. Matthews: Now, Mr. Lovestone, the Communist Party, for example in this country at the present time is what we might call strictly isolationist in its attitude toward European war. Could we reduce that to terms that are much more correct by calling it just a case of pro-German propaganda?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, you see, I am an isolationist myself, but for a totally different reason. I was that. I do not mean in the narrow sense of the word as used on the Hill here. I think the one hope of the world is to keep this country out of the war. I had that idea a year ago, five years ago, and 10 years ago. The Communist Party up until 1 September [1939], or sometime around 4 September, had the very opposite idea. It had that idea as a result of its GPU character, its police mind, because of the situation over there.

Today the Communist Party is isolationist, not because it is concerned with the interests of the workers or the farmers of this country, but because at the moment the interests of Soviet foreign policy dictate that it would be best for the United States not get into the war, since if it should get in, it would get in against Germany, and Russia and Germany have a common defense, and therefore the Communist Party in this country is against war, and a great deal of the propaganda against war today is not genuine anti-war propaganda, but is pro-Stalin-Hitler propaganda.

Mr. Matthews: Now, Mr. Lovestone, you have had a good deal of experience, both while you were in the leadership of the Communist Party of this country, and subsequent thereto, with reference to the so-called nuisance clubs which the Communist Party sets up and operates. I wonder if you would give us the benefit of your information with reference to some of these organizations specifically. For example, can you identify clearly and without qualifications the International Workers Order as one of the organizations under the control of the Communist Party?

Mr. Lovestone: Of course Mr. Browder is an expert and he gave you all of them in his theory of transmission-belts, but I might mention when we split from the Communist Party, one of the issues we had with them was we were against the organization of the International Workers Order as a competing organi-

zation to the Workers' International [Workmen's Circle]. Subsequently the Communist Party went ahead and organized the International Workers Order as a strict appendage of the Communist Party.

Mr. Matthews: What could you say about the International Labor Defense in the same connection?

Mr. Lovestone: The International Labor Defense was organized in my time. We were the inspiring force in organizing it, but I must stress that at that time we were quite non-partisan in administering funds and help to those in need of legal defense. Since that time I do not think that has been the case, and it has been a strictly speaking a Communist Party organization.

Mr. Matthews: What about the Friends of the Soviet Union?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, that is an obvious institution. I think nobody will challenge that. I endorse Browder's opinion here.

Mr. Matthews: You have had some personal experience in the American League Against War and Fascism, which has now become the American League for Peace and Democracy.

Mr. Lovestone: Yes.

Mr. Matthews: What is your opinion, from your experience in that organization, with reference to its character?

Mr. Lovestone: When it was first organized we tried to affiliate our organization to it and we needed the assistance of a lot of fellow travellers in order to enable us to step into the hall, and when we tried to win representation of its committees, we were denied that, and I came dangerously near getting my skull cracked, because I was going to ask for the floor. Otherwise, the organization was quite non-partisan.

Mr. Matthews: Now, I think we had better make that perfectly clear. You say otherwise it was non-partisan. You mean strictly under the control of the Communist Party?

Mr. Lovestone: It is under the control of the Communist Party like a blot is under the control of a blotter – inseparable. If you separate the blot from the blotter there is a hole in the blotter, and no blotter.

Mr. Matthews: There is a good deal of debate, both public and private, on this question, Mr. Lovestone. I would like to ask you if you have even the slightest doubt as to the character of the American League?

Mr. Lovestone: You see, I am not in a position to speak from documents, and I suppose in a court of law I could not adduce exhibits. I am in a position to speak rather in the sense of a teleologist or geologist. I can tell a footprint, or I can tell fossils, or I can smell something, and the basis of my experience is in the sense of utilizing the function of the olfactory nerve or judging footprints, and I would say regardless of the nobility or sincerity and genuineness of intentions and motives of many of those who supported it – it is nothing but a tool, a weapon, an instrument, a utensil of the Communist Party.

Mr. Matthews: Well, I am only asking you for your expression, based on your information and first-hand experience. You may not recall it, but at the time you came very near getting your head cracked for asking for the floor, I was in the chair on that occasion.

Mr. Lovestone: That is right.

Mr. Matthews: However, I had nothing to do with your almost getting your head cracked. I lost complete control of the delegated assembly, and we were in a stage of riot for an hour or more.

Mr. Lovestone: That is right.

Mr. Matthews: And, I am asking you, on the basis of your own experience, how you characterise this organization.

Mr. Lovestone: On the basis of that experience, and a lot of other experience, I characterise it in that sense.

Mr. Whitley: Mr. Chairman, if I may refer to Mr. Lovestone's explanation of a moment ago, I think there is no doubt but that he is thoroughly qualified from experience as an expert to express opinions on organizations having to do with the Communists.

Mr. Starnes: Why certainly not.

Mr. Voorhis: Of course he is.

Mr. Starnes: If the man who helped form the organization, was in it from its inception, does not know, I would like to know how anyone could know.

Mr. Voorhis: What organization was it that you just mentioned?

Mr. Matthews: The American League for Peace and Democracy.

Mr. Chairman, I think Mr. Whitley has some organizations he would like to ask the witness about, and some individuals also.

Mr. Whitley: Do you have any knowledge, Mr. Lovestone, of an organization known as the American Student Union? Either first-hand or from your observation as an expert on the subject?

Mr. Lovestone: No knowledge, first-hand or otherwise, except I might say when it was formed we were against its formation, because we said: 'Well, once it is formed, the Communist Party will grab control of it'. I could not prove that the Communist Party has control of it, but somehow or other I know when these organizations get together there is something at the bottom of them, somebody gets them. They just do not run in a vacuum. And here I have only suspicions on the basis of my experience, but which suspicions I feel quite sure of – but I could not give any documentary proof.

I have no personal experience with the American Student Union. I know in a number of localities where our own people tried to work in there we ran into Communist Party domination and well, if we did not get our heads cracked, it is because students are not so vigorous. On these occasions we get our 'walking-papers'. Our applications are lost.

Mr. Voorhis: When you refer to 'our own people', who do you mean?

Mr. Lovestone: Members of the Independent Labor League of America.

Mr. Matthews: You know that your members ran into considerable difficulty at the annual Convention of the American Student Union, which was held at Vassar?

Mr. Lovestone: That is right.

Mr. Matthews: In the Christmas holidays of 1937.

Mr. Lovestone: [We] could not even present a motion, could not get the floor. While others might get the floor, our people could not, and to me that would be a sign of Communist Party domination in the sense that the Communist Party would be ready to allow some preacher, pastor, to get up and pray for mercy, and have an opportunity to express an opinion, whereas our people would not be allowed to speak. If our people got up they would bludgeon them with argument, or beat them down in a discussion, because we have had experience in doing that.

Mr. Whitley: Do you have any knowledge, Mr. Lovestone, of an organization known as the American Youth Congress?

Mr. Lovestone: None at all in the form of personal experience, but if you will examine the date of its organization and you examine the trend of changes of Communist Party policy, you will find a coincidence and you will find the spirit carried over into it. I would say again that Mr. Browder was right, the Communist Party has tried to use that as a transmission-belt. It does not mean that everyone must be officially a member of the Communist Party. It does not mean that one even be a fellow traveller. He might be a fellow limper, just limp along with them – but he must be usable, not necessarily useful in a social sense, but must be usable from the point of view of the Communist Party.

Mr. Matthews: I understand that you have followed in a general way the shifting line of the American Youth Congress, and it is your observation that that shifting line follows the same shifts as the Communist Party.

Mr. Lovestone: Well, take the example of the organization toward the Oxford pledge as a classic example. At one time the Communist Party was against the Oxford pledge. Today it is not against the Oxford pledge. It is against war. While the pledge has not changed – the pledge is the same, the pledgers are the same – something has changed somewhere. It is the same pledge, the same people take the pledge, but they have changed their attitude toward the pledge. If you tie up the situation in that way, you will be able to find some perhaps invisible, inponderable, nevertheless effective force moving things.

Mr. Whitley: In other words, Mr. Lovestone, would you say from your experience and the opportunity which you have had to study and observe Communist-controlled organizations over the period of many years, would you express it as your best opinion and judgment that the American Student Union and the American Youth Congress are subject to Communist control and influence?

Mr. Lovestone: Both my olfactory nerve and my extensive experience in investigation would dictate that conclusion.

Mr. Voorhis: Well, when you say that, however, just so the record will be plain, that does not mean that there are not many organizations which have affiliates with the American Youth Congress, does it? Nor that there would not be so very many people in most any of those organizations who will be so?

Mr. Lovestone: The overwhelming majority of the members may be anti-Communist?

Mr. Voorhis: Yes.

Mr. Lovestone: The overwhelming majority of the organization's affiliates may be anti- or non-Communist, but the dominating, dictating spirit or effort to have a dominating, dictating spirit is of a particular character.

Mr. Mason: And their object in getting in these other organizations that are not Communist is to give a front and cover up and hide their activities within the larger organizations?

Mr. Lovestone: The outer circle of the periphery is what they call it. You make your nucleus within the periphery. The nucleus is a very small part of the periphery. The bigger, the better – the more the nucleus has to feed on.

Mr. Starnes: There would be no sense, no rhyme nor reason, in setting up a front organization if everybody in it was a Communist.

Mr. Lovestone: You must recognise this: at one time that was the policy. They wanted to organize organizations in which only they themselves were in the organization. They had a united front with themselves, but now it is different. Today, it is just the other way around.

Mr. Starnes: Certainly. It is a strategy that they used – devised and used to lure innocent people in there and lend respectability to a movement that was Communistic in its inception or parts of the Communist program. That is all that it was.

Mr. Lovestone: That is an element of strategy.

Mr. Whitley: Mr. Lovestone, are you acquainted with Mr. Joseph Brodsky, an attorney in New York?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes.

Mr. Whitley: Have you ever known him to be a Communist, Party member, or active in the Communist Party?

Mr. Lovestone: He was our lawyer. He was quite sympathetic. In my days he never carried a card in the Communist Party, but we always trusted him in the sense of a confidant. Whether he has joined the Communist Party since or not, I am in no position to say.

Mr. Whitley: There was introduced into the record of the committee's proceedings sometime ago official documents of the British government which had to do with the raid conducted by Scotland Yard on Arcos, the trading organization, Russian trading organization in London, that raid being conducted in 1926, and in that document the name of Mr. Brodsky is listed several times under two addresses in New York with a notation for the transmission of Party funds or a notation to that effect. Do you know whether he ever functioned in that capacity?

Mr. Lovestone: We generally employed or used the names and addresses of people who were not in the Communist Party to receive confidential mail from other countries and sometimes the confidential mail might include some money without the recipient even knowing what was inside. I would say, very definitely, Mr. Brodsky never received any money for the Communist Party in my days – very definitely.

His name was on these address lists that you refer to in the sense that I mentioned before. He was a trusted sympathiser and confidant and as such he could receive anything, whether it be confidential instructions or confidential cash, without his knowing what was the contents of the envelope.

Mr. Whitley: Did Mr. Brodsky know why his name was found on the lists which were seized in that London raid?

Mr. Lovestone: That would be very hard for me to answer. Generally our practice was to get the permission of anyone whose name we used, but sometimes, I confess, we used names without permission. Whether it was so in this case

or not, I could not say. At any rate, even if his name had been used without permission, he was a very reliable person, very honest man and would be perfectly safe.

Mr. Whitley: Mr. Lovestone, you have already in your testimony referred to a Mr. Benjamin Gitlow, who has previously appeared before the committee, and Mr. Joseph Zack. Were you acquainted with them?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes. Joseph Zack [Kornfeder] was a charter member of the Communist Party, at one time a member of the Central [Executive] Committee. On several occasions he was a member of the Central [Executive] Committee of the Communist Party.

Mr. Whitley: What was his particular field of activity?

Mr. Lovestone: He was very active in the trade-union field and after we were expelled, he, having been one of the original defenders of dual unionism, became a department head, that is, trade-union director.

Mr. Whitley: Now, Mr. Lovestone, there has been considerable testimony before the committee previously with reference to Comintern representatives, that is, representatives from the Comintern to the United States. That testimony has been conflicting in that some witnesses have stated that it was the general practice and policy for the Comintern to have a representative here, whereas I believe Mr. Browder and Mr. Foster testified that it was the most exceptional practice, and I believe one or the other, I do not recall which, could only remember one instance in which there had been a Comintern representative here. Can you help the committee clear that up? Do you have any different expression on that point?

Mr. Lovestone: No. In our days there were no permanent Comintern representatives in this country. There were occasions when the Communist International representatives came here. There was one here in 1922 – I think he has been executed since. That was Mr. [Henryk] Walecki. He was a Pole. And then I think the sixth National Convention of our organization [New York: March 1929] had two representatives of the Communist International. One of them was Harry Pollitt, the other Mr. Dengel. They stayed here for a short time. There was no permanent representative here.

Mr. Whitley: That was during your period?

Mr. Lovestone: During my time. They occasionally came. These were occasions for special things – that is, whenever there was difficulty or some fight brewing, in order to make peace, or whenever they wanted to ram something through, as they did in the case of the sixth National Convention. We [Lovestone and his allies] were the majority and they wanted to change it.

Mr. Whitley: In other words, the purpose of the Comintern representatives here was to see that some particular policy or some particular program was properly carried out.

Mr. Lovestone: That is right.

Mr. Whitley: This was just a further method of exercising the Moscow control.

Mr. Lovestone: Without doubt.

Mr. Whitley: Through direct representation.

Mr. Lovestone: Without doubt.

Mr. Whitley: And you do not know whether that policy of having Comintern representatives in this country has been expanded or extended since the time you were in the Party?

Mr. Lovestone: I do not know in any documentary sense, but if you are asking my opinion, I would say it has been extended to the point of stranglehold.

Mr. Starnes: Is that on account of the peculiar characteristic of this fellow Stalin or his mode of operation?

Mr. Lovestone: It is characteristic. It is that, and a little more. I think they work through the Roman consul system now. They want to have their people on the job and on the spot watching and they do not allow any possibility for development of initiative. So, it is best to have the initiative-killer on the job all of the time. I could not prove that in any way. I am not qualified to speak of it in the sense of experience today. I can only surmise on the basis of past experience and what I see happening.

Mr. Starnes: I suggest that we stay out of the field of surmising and conjecture. If you have anything definite, let us have it; if not, let us close.

Mr. Whitley: This morning you mentioned George Mink, with reference to Logorsky. What were George Mink's functions in the United States, Mr. Lovestone, to your knowledge?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, at first he had no functions, because he was incompetent to have any functions. Then all of a sudden he was made an active leader of the marine workers and then he went to Russia and came back as an authority on trade-union questions and afterward he cut loose from the trade-union work and began to handle some confidential work in the nature of which we did not know, and we did not ask anything about it.

Mr. Whitley: Did you have any reason to believe that he might have been connected with the GPU?

Mr. Lovestone: Good reasons to believe that. Again, I could not prove it in a court of law.

Mr. Whitley: From your knowledge and acquaintanceship with him, knowing of his activities at that time, that would have been an accurate observation or a fair observation, you would say?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, that would be an accurate conclusion.

Mr. Whitley: Mr. Lovestone, do you know whether the Comintern or Profintern, or both, considered the maritime industry in the United States and in other countries as a particularly strategic industry in which they made unusual efforts to expand their influence and control?

Mr. Lovestone: For a while we did not, but a little later we did, and I think since I have left it has been developed very much.

Mr. Whitley: Are you acquainted with the present organization of the National Maritime Union, the NMU, Mr. Lovestone?

Mr. Lovestone: I do not know any of the leaders. I know about them from what I have read in the press and what I study about them, in my general studies of the trade union movement.

Mr. Whitley: You do not feel that you are qualified?

Mr. Lovestone: I do not think so.

Mr. Whitley: To discuss it?

Mr. Lovestone: I do not think I would be qualified to give any authoritative statement about it, personally, except a general evaluation that there is a very unhealthy situation in that union. But otherwise, I do not know. I do not know a single one of them personally.

Mr. Whitley: You mean unhealthy with reference to the Communist influence and control?

Mr. Lovestone: Oh, I would say the Communist Party influence in there is quite decisive.

Mr. Whitley: Now, can you name for the committee, Mr. Lovestone, any GPU or military intelligence agents of the Soviet Union who have, to your knowledge, operated in this country? In a previous testimony of one witness, the name of Felix Wolf was mentioned as a military intelligence agent in this country during the period of approximately 1924 to 1929. Were you acquainted with him?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, I knew Felix Wolf very well, from Hamburg. Felix Wolf is a fine person. He was here for a while, and he has been executed.

Mr. Whitley: Do you know whether General Kléber was here? You mentioned him this morning. Do you know whether he was ever active in this country?

Mr. Lovestone: Kléber visited us a number of times. I never met him in the United States. I know he was here. That was after my expulsion.

Mr. Whitley: Are you acquainted with the circumstances, Mr. Lovestone, surrounding the trip which Mr. Browder made to China about 1928 or 1929, I believe?

Mr. Matthews: 1927, I think, perhaps.

Mr. Whitley: Or 1927?

Mr. Matthews: 1927, I think, perhaps.

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, sir. He was working at that time.

Mr. Whitley: I believe it was stated it was in connection with some mission for the Profintern trade-union work.

Mr. Lovestone: Yes, he was working for the Party, the Profintern delegation to China at that time, and the Pan-Pacific Bureau.

Mr. Whitley: I believe there is some previous testimony to the effect that that trip on the part of Mr. Browder was on instructions from either the Comintern or Profintern and had nothing to do with the American Communist Party and activities, either politically or financially.

Mr. Lovestone: The trip was solely for the Profintern and had nothing to do with the American Communist Party and activities, either politically or financially.

Mr. Whitley: One further question, Mr. Lovestone, that occurs to me at the moment. Do you have any reason to believe that the fundamental activities of the Communist Party have changed in recent years even though the line itself has changed on several occasions, to meet the situations as they arose? In other words, did the change from an ultra-left position to at least a publicly avowed ultra-right position, did that mean that the Party has actually changed fundamentally in its program or in its characteristics and strategy, or was that just merely a maneuver?

Mr. Lovestone: It was a very important practical change dictated by Russian domination and Russian practices and the Russian foreign policy, but had nothing to do with the change in the fundamental rule of the Communist Party as such.

Mr. Whitley: In other words, it was just a strategy to, if anything, conceal or cover up that role?

Mr. Lovestone: To get further.

Mr. Whitley: Yes. Are there any further questions?

Mr. Matthews: Yes. Mr. Lovestone, in the testimony before the committee, Mr. Browder said he never sent reports or regular reports to the Comintern. Do you know anything to the contrary?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, I can only speak from my own experience and then my conclusions. In my custodianship, in the office of Secretary, I sent regular reports and discussed quite in detail many of the American problems with the Comintern. I would assume that that practice continued after I left on an even more extensive scale, unless the Comintern was so sure of Browder that it did not even need any reports from him, which is entirely possible.

Mr. Mason: May I ask whether you sent those reports regularly because you knew they were expected, or demanded?

Mr. Lovestone: It was a part of the requirements of my office.

Mr. Matthews: Was it also the practice to send representatives of the American Party for periods of residence in Moscow?

Mr. Lovestone: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, we were criticised many times because we would not send people across to stay there. Some of our boys were not too anxious to stay there. We had a tough time getting people to go over, but we did do that.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Browder said that the American Party always took an active part in changing the Party's line, whenever it was changed in this country. Is that correct?

Mr. Lovestone: That, in the Mark Twain sense, is slightly exaggerated. It is totally incorrect.

Mr. Matthews: Mr. Lovestone, you may have noticed from the current reports from abroad that [Otto] Kuusinen, who has been mentioned in your testimony, and who made a speech on the American question which we introduced in the record this morning, is heading the political government which has been sent into Finland from the Soviet Union. You know Kuusinen personally?

Mr. Lovestone: Very well, and I admire him, and he is one of the living miracles to me that he is still alive. He is a brilliant person in many ways, but he has not a strong personality. He is a very willing person, but rather able.

Mr. Matthews: Did he say to you, in effect at least, during your fight with Stalin that he injured your position?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, that was quite common knowledge in the Communist International that when we broke, Kuusinen's heart and mind was with us, but as he said himself, he was a refugee, a man without a country, an exile, and what could he do but just go along? That was the basis of his real position – not conviction and not feeling. He felt very badly in the whole fight.

Mr. Matthews: Well, Mr. Lovestone, without going into any details regarding the position of your present organization, I will ask you if the resolutions of the [eighth] Convention of the Independent Labor League of America [2–4 September 1939] as set forth in *The Workers Age* of 23 September [1939] is a correct statement of the program of your organization?

Mr. Lovestone: The three fundamental resolutions of our organization as adopted at the last Convention are the following:

First, a resolution on the trade-union question, a part of which I read before in the evaluation of Stalinism.

Secondly, a resolution on socialism and democracy which is in complete opposition to totalitarianism as the road for the achievement of social life.

Thirdly, a resolution on socialist unity, which is an attempt to create a united socialist movement in America, in this country, as totally opposed to and distinct from the Stalin movement.

Those are the three fundamental programs, and documents which reveal our position today.

Mr. Matthews: I will ask, Mr. Chairman – I do not think you have quite answered my question exactly – I will ask if these resolutions of the ILLA Convention set forth the program in full?

Mr. Lovestone: Yes.

Mr. Matthews: If that is the case, I would like to have these resolutions incorporated in the record.

Mr. Starnes: Without objection, it will be done.

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Mr. Matthews: Do you wish to characterise your present organization any further?

Mr. Lovestone: Well, our organization is a militant socialist organization working in this country, not seeking to dominate the labor movement, but working within the labor movement, with a view of helping it to gain improved conditions, with a view of helping it become the decisive force in this country. We are a radical socialist constructive force. Our difference with the Stalinists is not only along the lines that I have mentioned before, but we consider them as an anti-revolutionary and anti-socialist organization – simply an agency of the Stalin-Hitler combination. We work in the trade unions primarily, because most of our people are trade-union people.

We, of course, have connections with organizations outside of this country, like the Independent Labor Party of England, the Workers and Peasants Socialist Party of France, an underground movement in Germany, where no other labor movement could exist, but we determine and decide our own policies in this country solely and strictly on the basis of our own conditions here and on our own judgment. We make our own bitter mistakes. We learn sometimes in time, sometimes too late, to overcome them – but my experience over quite a number of years in the labor movement is that this is the only sound and genuinely democratic way of working and we are dedicated to that procedure.

Mr. Starnes: Mr. Mason, do you have any questions?

Mr. Mason: No.

Mr. Starnes: Do you have any questions, Mr. Voorhis?

Mr. Voorhis: No.

Mr. Starnes: Is that all, Mr. Matthews?

Mr. Matthews: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Starnes: Do you have anything, Mr. Whitley?

Mr. Whitley: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Starnes: The committee will stand in recess subject to the call of the Chairman of the full committee.

(Thereupon, at 2:58 pm, the committee took a recess as above indicated.)

4. Letter From Dissidents on Organizational Disintegration⁶

Dear comrades:

Wednesday 13 November, at the summarizing of the Independent Labor League of America pre-Convention discussion on the war issue, Bertram D. Wolfe, reporter for the minority, resigned from the organization.

Reporting for the majority (Lovestone, Herberg, Herman *et al.* faction) which represents pro-allied views, ranging from demands for limited aid to support of the recent battleship gift and calls for more, was B. Herman who holds an extreme pro-British view.

Wolfe reported for the minority which supports an anti-war position containing variations from the orthodox-Leninist position to the pacifist. Wolfe's resignation left the brunt of the fight on primarily younger elements who, deprived of his experienced assistance and prestige, will not be able to bring any sort of forceful opposition against the seasoned maneuverings of Lovestone and co. – especially since the minority has but one member left on the leading political Bureau, Jim Cork.

Herman directed slanderous statements against the chief minority spokesmen Wolfe, Cork, Kane, Stewart and Symonds. Part of his tactics were to accuse minority spokesmen of echoing the *Daily Worker*, Herbert Hoover and Lindbergh, of acting in a manner that would please Hitler, of being liars and fakers. These tactics aroused the anger of the general members but most of them can be counted on to follow Lovestone.

In Wolfe's resigning without feeling it necessary to dignify the majority stand by presenting an opposition resolution, or attempting to form a minority faction to fight for an anti-war position at the convention in late December, the ILLA makes its final bow and will shortly, after the Convention, give up any pretences at being a political organization, at which time it will continue solely as a 'discussion and publication society'. A statement to this effect was

6 'Lovestone Group "Consolidates" Again', *Labor Action*, 9 December 1940, p. 2.

made at the meeting in the form of a recommendation by D. Benjamin, who recently resigned as New York district organizer after holding this position for a number of years.

We who write this feel that the left-wing movement should know about Wolfe's resignation in the I.L.L.A. even though Wolfe has not cared to publicise it, and the *Workers Age* has maintained a suspicious silence on it so far. We are forwarding this to the *Socialist Call*, the *Socialist Appeal*, and *Labor Action*.

For revolutionary socialist unity, from a gang who will continue to seek it.

26 November 1940.

5. Towards a Genuine American Democratic Socialism! Independent Labor League Dissolves Organization – Calls on Progressive Unionists, Socialists, Radicals to Unite to Make New Start⁷

(This declaration was adopted unanimously by the National Convention of the Independent Labor League of America, meeting in New York City on 28 and 29 December 1940. – Editor, *Workers Age*)

There are times when it becomes the supreme duty of an organization or an individual to speak out frankly and say the word of truth despite all the damage it may do to the most cherished illusions. The present moment is such a time.

Present-day American radicalism finds itself in a hopeless blind alley from which there is no escape along the old lines. All the organizations, parties and groups that have come out of the old Socialist and Communist movements have lost their very ground of existence. The official Communist Party, which is nothing more than a foreign agency of the Stalin dictatorship of Russia, is a thoroughly alien and hostile element in the American labor movement. The various Trotskyist sects, as well as the organizations that have emerged from the old Socialist Party, however wide their differences on all other questions may be, have one fatal defect in common: they simply close their eyes and refuse to recognise that we are living in a new world, a new world with problems that require new solutions, and tasks that demand new programs, a new world that cannot be met in terms of old ideas and formulas, no matter how valid they may have been in their day. It has become painfully clear that none of these groups or organizations has really learnt anything fundamental from the immense world-shaking events of the past 10 or 20 years. And, what is worse, as organizations, they seem to show absolutely no awareness that there is anything to be learnt.

⁷ *Workers Age*, 25 January 1941, p. 1.

And yet let anyone look at the world and see. Virtually the entire European labor movement, a growth of decades, has been destroyed. It has been destroyed not merely physically through Nazi conquest and repression; it has been destroyed morally as well, through internal decay and impotence. Indeed, had it not been for this deep moral decay, the physical destruction of the movement could never have been so rapid and complete. The European labor movement on the Continent had lost its inner strength and will to live; it could neither halt Fascist barbarism on its way to power, nor preserve itself against its ravages from within and without.

The collapse of the European labor movement is the expression of the moral and ideological bankruptcy of every tendency and variety of socialism, right and left wing alike. Old-line Social Democracy, traditional Marxian orthodoxy and Russian Bolshevism have all failed. We may still learn a great deal from each, but we can never again look to any of them to show us the way to socialism.

The events of the past eight years, culminating in the year of war that has been the equivalent of a whole decade, have transformed the face of history. Old stages of development, that only yesterday we believed had been definitely superseded by the march of progress, have suddenly emerged again with the most compelling force. On the other hand, whatever may happen, the road to socialism in Britain and the United States will never again appear as we once imagined it, from the most gradualist Fabian to the most revolutionary activist. The neat and tidy picture of steady advance to a clearly defined, destined goal of socialism has been shattered to bits. In its place, we have a world in endless turmoil, in perpetual eruption. The neat and tidy formulas of yesterday, and the organizations based upon embodying them, will no longer do.

In America, the socialist and radical movement, though apparently in a somewhat more secure and sheltered position, is actually in a plight perhaps worse than that of the European labor movement. For American socialism never was – as most of European socialism undoubtedly was – a genuine outgrowth of the labor movement, bound to it with organic ties. American socialism has not developed from within the labor movement, but largely from without, and this has given it weaknesses over and above those it has had in common with European labor. Today, American socialism – and here we include all socialist groups, whatever their origin – is more remote from the labor movement, more divorced from its problems, attitudes and aspirations, than it has been in decades. As an organic section of the labor movement, American socialism virtually does not exist.

The existing socialist and radical groups are essentially out of touch with American life and its problems. They live in an artificial world of their own that

makes it impossible for them even to see the fatal defects of their existence. They cling to old phrases and fetishes, to formulas and shibboleths long obsolete, with a pathetic blindness. They are unable to take a positive, constructive stand on present-day problems. They cannot cope with the new situation because the burden of outlived tradition so weighs down on them that they cannot open their eyes and see. However great their services may once have been, these groups today are things of the dead past. Like sleepwalkers, they cannot be awakened, they go through the same old motions and mumble the same old phrases in a new world of threat and turmoil. They are in fact mere empty shadows; their tragedy is that they do not seem to be aware of it.

And yet there is fertile ground for a genuine American socialism today. The organized labor movement was never so powerful. Despite the disastrous split in its ranks, its spirit is high. More than that, it has manifested a readiness and an ability to face new problems that few of those always so prompt to condemn it for its 'backwardness' could have anticipated. With all the defects and shortcomings that the AF of L and CIO may have, American labor as a whole has exhibited a vitality, an inner strength and a freshness of outlook that is one of the most promising aspects of a situation otherwise only too dark.

A genuine American socialism, with roots struck deep in the living soil of American reality, can come only from within the organized labor movement. And when it comes, it will perhaps not resemble any of the blueprints so abundantly produced by socialists in bygone days. But it will be a sturdy native growth, of the bone and tissue of the American people, and not a mere hot-house product, as so much of American socialism has been in the past. It will really be the organization of the most advanced, most conscious elements of the American workers and of all other sections of the people that serve a useful function in society. It will be the organization that will really be able to cope with the immense tasks that face socialism in America and to contribute to a solution of the gigantic problems that confront the world.

For the past several years, the Independent Labor League of America has made every effort within its limited resources to strike out a new path for American socialism. Our work has not been wasted. This is neither the time nor the place for a critical evaluation of what we have done or left undone, but we believe that it does not go beyond the facts to state that we have made some contributions of major importance to the welfare and progress of the American labor movement. Above all, we can declare with justified pride that we were among the first in this country to catch the vision of what a genuine American socialist movement should be and that we have since been indefatigable in the effort to convert this vision into a living reality.

This we have not succeeded in accomplishing, in large part because, try as we might, we could not emancipate ourselves from the fatal stigma of our origin as a 'splinter' group. Upon the ILLA, too, the burden of the past has weighed with disastrous effect, although we, unlike so many of the other socialist organizations, have made unceasing efforts to free ourselves. Our attempt to force a way out of the blind alley of present-day radicalism through launching a movement for socialist unity failed because of the lack of interest and understanding manifested by the leadership of the Socialist Party and the other socialist groups. There is no use blinking the facts. Our present organization, too, has outlived its usefulness. If we were to maintain it out of cherished illusions of blind devotion, we would be doing a distinct disservice to the cause of American socialism. This we will never consent to do.

Therefore, we, delegates to the National Convention of the Independent Labor League of America, having given the most thorough consideration to the entire situation, do decide to dissolve the I.L.L.A. and to release all members and officers from any obligations to the organization.

We take this action not in a spirit of defeat but in a spirit of hope. There is wide recognition among all sections of society everywhere that the old order is definitely and irrevocably gone, and a new democratic, socialist order is being born. Within the old-line Socialist organizations and outside their ranks, among the progressive elements in the trade unions, there is a growing ferment of ideas, and elements have emerged who, to a greater or lesser degree, have begun to look in a new direction. If all of these elements could resolve to throw off the dead weight of the past and its outlived organizations, and united in a joint effort to blaze a new trail to genuine American socialism, an important contribution towards that end could undoubtedly be made.

The great need of the hour is the unification of all forces who are ready to meet the new situation with realism, integrity and profound faith in the vitality of the socialist idea. The great need of the hour is a new start that will transcend the long outlived disagreements, disputes and factions; that will be neither Social Democratic nor Bolshevik in the traditional sense, but socialist; that will encourage the utmost freedom of thought and discussion while it strives for the utmost clarity and understanding; that will take its stand unequivocally on the basis of democracy against totalitarianism of every brand, shape or form. The great need of the hour is a new start towards a genuine American democratic socialism.

As we dissolve the ILLA, we point with all urgency to this need. We express our full and sincere readiness to cooperate in any way in making this new start towards an American democratic socialism. We call upon those who have

hitherto been members, friends or supporters of the I.L.L.A. not to flag in their activities in the labor movement, but to redouble their efforts in whatever new forms and along whatever new lines may appear necessary. We appeal to the members and supporters of other socialist groups, and to socialists generally, to do their share in achieving the great goal common to all of us. We call for the unity of all progressive trade unionists and forward-looking American socialists, whether they belong to any existing organizations or whether they are among the hundreds of thousands of unaffiliated radicals to be found in this country today.

A new start is necessary, imperative. Let us make it before it is too late.

Independent Labor League of America

29 December 29 1940.

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